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## FOREWORD

by

THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY

K. ONWUKA DIKE, M.A., Ph.D.,

*Principal, University College, Ibadan*

ON October 1st 1960 the history of Nigeria as an independent sovereign state began; and it is appropriate that this first year of our new history should be marked by the commencement of a new volume of the Historical Society's Journal. Nevertheless the achievements of the present are built upon the past, not only the colonial past but the immemorial tradition of our own societies. Now more than ever, when the pace of change is so rapid it is essential to look back and understand our cultural heritage. What is more, it is particularly important at this time that research into the African past and the publication of such research should be undertaken here in Africa. Only thus will it be possible to avoid the false perspective inevitably arising from looking at a country from the outside.

It is for these reasons that the pioneer work of the Historical Society through its Journal and other publications seems to me of such fundamental importance.

*Ibadan, 1st December 1960*

K. ONWUKA DIKE

# FOREWORD

BY

THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY

E. H. HAYWARD, LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The Society for the Preservation of the American Revolution was organized in 1876, at the centennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Its purpose was to preserve the memory of the great events of the American Revolution, and to promote the study of the history of the United States. The Society has since that time been engaged in a variety of activities, including the publication of a journal, the holding of lectures, and the preservation of historical documents. The Society has also been instrumental in the establishment of the National Archives and Records Administration, and in the creation of the National Park Service. The Society's efforts have been instrumental in the preservation of the American Revolution, and in the promotion of the study of the history of the United States.

E. H. HAYWARD, LL.D.

President of the Society

## MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IN THE KINGDOM OF WARRI TO THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

*by*  
A. F. C. RYDER

UNTIL Protestant and Catholic missions penetrated Yorubaland in the middle of the nineteenth century, Christianity had secured no permanent footing in Nigeria. Yet, from the late fifteenth century when the Portuguese first made contact with the Kingdom of Benin, the coastal states had long been regarded as a promising area for missionary activity. The fact that the Kingdom of Benin had reached a relatively advanced stage of political development, with influence extending over a wide area, stimulated the efforts of Portuguese kings and missionaries, just as they were spurred on by a similar situation in the Congo. Their first dealings with the Oba of Benin and his chiefs led them to think he was well-disposed to their faith; they likewise gained encouragement from the belief of the Benin people in a supreme god which, they considered, should dispose them to accept the doctrines of Christianity. However, these sanguine hopes were dashed by the first mission to Benin which soon discovered that the Oba's interest in the new religion extended no further than a desire to humour the King of Portugal so that European weapons might be sent to Benin; for Papal decrees forbade the delivery of arms to infidels. Despite the discouragement, further missions went to Benin in the course of the following two centuries, often at the invitation of the Oba, but an invitation inspired, apparently, by political motives. Neither any lasting result, nor even any temporary success came of these missions. Thus, by the middle of the sixteenth century the Portuguese had made no progress whatsoever with the introduction of Christianity into the states of Nigeria. In the second half of the century, however, they scored a considerable success in establishing in Warri a Christian tradition that was to continue into the nineteenth century.

There exists no contemporary record of the first mission to Warri, nor indeed of the beginnings of Portuguese contact with that kingdom. On the basis of the documentary evidence that has so far come to light, it is possible that there existed no independent Itsekiri state in the Forcados River area at least as late as 1530, and the subsequent establishment of such a state with its centre at Ode

Itsekiri<sup>1</sup> may well have been encouraged by the Portuguese who in the 1540s<sup>2</sup> were increasingly at loggerheads with the Oba of Benin. It is conceivable that they may have supplied the emergent state with firearms in return for trading facilities and co-operation in the introduction of Christian missions. A state seeking to establish its independence of Benin might also be ready to embrace the new religion as a means of counteracting the supernatural powers attributed to the Oba. But unless and until further evidence comes to light these developments must remain matters of conjecture.

On the other hand, there is sufficient information available to fix an approximate date for the introduction of Christianity into the Kingdom of Warri and to reconstruct some of the achievements of the first mission. It took place under the direction of Gaspar Cão, the Augustinian bishop of São Tome, who was resident in that diocese between the years 1556 to 1565 and from 1571 to 1574. He sent a company of Augustinian monks to Warri where they founded a Christian settlement which they named Santo Agostinho.<sup>3</sup> In the following century the capital of the Itsekiri was often referred to, by priests and rulers alike, by this name of Santo Agostinho,<sup>4</sup> so it may well have been bestowed on the whole town of Ode Itsekiri as a form of baptism to signalise the acceptance of the Christian faith there. The same had happened earlier in the capital of the Congo which the Portuguese missionaries renamed San Salvador.

One of these first Augustinian missionaries named Father Francisco a Mater Dei (probably he was the leader of the mission) acquired great prestige and authority among the Itsekiri. He crowned his achievement by one day gathering the population around "a certain tree which, thanks to charms and diabolical superstitions was held in great awe among them": he then proceeded to destroy it, presumably by cutting it down. When the gods of the juju failed to inflict immediate and condign punishment on the perpetrator of this outrage, Father Francisco's prestige rose higher than ever. So far as is known the mission did not succeed in bringing the reigning Olu of the Itsekiri to baptism, but this same Father Francisco gained a very important victory when he was able to baptise the Olu's son

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1. Ode Itsekiri was the capital until the mid-nineteenth century. The Portuguese called both the capital and the kingdom *Oere* from the name *Iwere* which the Itsekiri still commonly apply to themselves. To avoid confusion, the anglicised form *Warri* has been used throughout this paper.
  2. ref. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon. *Corpo Cronologico* I. 90.126. August 1553. Letter informing the King of Portugal that the factor of São Tome has suspended trade with Benin.
  3. Cuvelier, J. & Jadin, L. *L'Ancien Congo d'après les archives romaines (1518-1640)*. Brussels. 1954. p.73.
  4. e.g. *ibid.* p.89. In the year 1619.

under the name of Sebastian, after the reigning king of Portugal.<sup>1</sup> King Sebastian of Portugal was on the throne from 1557 to 1578, so, taking these dates in conjunction with the years during which Gaspar Cão was resident in São Tome, the date of the first mission to Warri can be fixed within the periods 1557 to 1565 or 1571 to 1574. Most probably it was sent during the latter years.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to estimate how far the successful introduction and maintenance of Christianity can be explained by the need of the young Itsekiri state to trade with the Portuguese. In the initial stages, at least, such a factor may have played a very important part. Certainly Sebastian, who became Olu before 1597, persevered in his new faith in face of great difficulties, the chief of which was lack of priests to instruct converts and administer the sacraments.<sup>3</sup> Among a newly converted people this was obviously an extremely serious shortcoming which was to result in the periodic collapse of Christianity among the Itsekiri, for it was never satisfactorily overcome. The reasons are not obscure, and contemporaries were well aware of them. In 1597 the Bishop of São Tome stated them thus:

“this kingdom is very poor and clergy would be unable to live there in reasonable comfort; moreover their health and their lives would be in very grave danger from the great unhealthiness of the climate”.<sup>4</sup>

These twin difficulties of financing the mission and finding priests ready to brave the mosquitoes were destined to destroy all hopes of a true conversion and to undo much of the achievement of missions which at long intervals overcame them. Sometimes as much as ten years passed and no priest visited Warri. As a later missionary exclaimed: “The morals of Rome are bad enough; can you imagine what they would be like if left for ten years without a single priest”.<sup>5</sup>

In 1584 the Augustinian monks were withdrawn from São Tome and so, presumably, from Warri as well, if indeed they continued their ministrations until that date. There is no further record of missionary activity in Warri until 1593 when a new Bishop of São Tome reached that island with a body of Franciscan missionaries, some of whom he sent to the mainland.<sup>6</sup> Only in Warri did they

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1. Brasio, A. *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*. vol. IV. Lisbon, 1955.p.541.

2. Gaspar Cão left São Tome in 1565 because of serious charges brought against him; he returned after a Papal inquiry had fully exonerated him. During the investigation, when his missionary activities were detailed as part of his defence, the Warri mission was never mentioned.

3. Cuvelier & Jadin. *op. cit.* p.242. Report by Francisco de Villanova, Bishop of São Tome, on his visitation *ad limina*, Lisbon, 24 October, 1597.

4. *ibid.*

5. Archivio della Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, Rome. (afterwards referred to as A.S.C.) *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi. Africa, Angola, Congo, Senegal*. vol. III. a. 1693-1710. fol. 105v. Francesco da Monteleone to the Sacra Congregazione, São Tome, 14 June, 1694.

6. Brasio, A. *op.cit.* vol. III. Lisbon, 1953. p. 460. Cuvelier & Jadin. *op.cit.* p.47.

meet with any success, presumably under the protection of Sebastian and by 1597 this effort had spent itself through the death of most of the priests. Warri again found itself without any resident missionary. A report on his episcopal visitation by the Bishop of São Tome describes the situation in Warri in 1597 as follows: "In the kingdom of Oere or Rio dos Forcados there is no parish church, although the King and a great part of his subjects are Christians". After explaining the difficulties in the way of maintaining priests there, the Bishop goes on to suggest this remedy:<sup>1</sup>

"At present I am making representations to His Catholic Majesty (i.e. Philip II of Spain) to the end that those who farm the revenues of São Tome and each year send ships to trade with that part of the mainland, may be obliged to take aboard their ships a priest, who must be suitably remunerated, to administer the sacraments in that kingdom".

His representations were successful: the King gave orders that ships trading to Warri for ivory should carry with them a priest who would reside there while the ship completed its cargo (this usually took about three months) and then return with it to São Tome.<sup>2</sup> By this means the Portuguese authorities hoped to reduce the length of time for which the Itsekiri were without priests from years to months, and also make it possible to employ the resident clergy of São Tome in these visits, instead of having to rely upon specially appointed missionaries who came only in small numbers at very irregular intervals and who were much more prone to tropical disease than the partially acclimatised residents of São Tome. At the same time the Spanish king agreed to the Bishop's suggestion that, because the Olu of Warri was too poor to maintain the priests from his own revenues, those who visited the kingdom in merchant ships should be allowed to buy slaves in Warri and sell them anywhere in Portuguese territories on payment of nominal duties. Profits in the slave trade were considered high enough to make this an attractive proposition, and contemporaries saw no incongruity in making use of the slave trade to support missionary activity, for their prime consideration was spiritual not humanitarian.

While the new arrangement represented a great improvement on the previous position, it made the ministrations of Christianity in Warri dependent on commercial interests: only so long as the São Tome merchants found the ivory trade of Warri profitable would they continue to send ships there. It was also dependent on there being priests in São Tome willing to undertake even the limited hazard of a temporary residence on the coast. A more satisfactory solution would have been to train natives of Warri to serve as priests

1. Brasio, A. *op. cit.* vol. III. pp.583-4.

2. Brasio, A. *op.cit.* vol. III. pp.557-8. Consulta of the Mesa da Consciencia e Ordens, 28 September, 1597: approved by royal letter dated 13 October, 1597.

in their own land. Francisco de Villanova, the Bishop of São Tome, responsible for the measures already described, also had a clear sense of the potential value of a native clergy in an area relatively inaccessible and unhealthy for missionaries from Europe. He must have been a shrewd and able diplomat for he managed to persuade the Olu of Warri, that is Sebastian, to send his eldest son, christened Domingos, to Portugal where under the care of Philip III he might be instructed in theology and the rites of the church "and afterwards serve Almighty God in the priestly office".<sup>1</sup> A later Bishop of São Tome referring to this event states that Domingos was illegitimate, without revealing the precise nature of his illegitimacy, and there is an Itsekiri legend of a son born to an Itsekiri princess after intercourse with the captain of the first Portuguese ship to appear in the Forcados River.<sup>2</sup> But the description of Domingos in contemporary documents as the eldest son of Sebastian<sup>3</sup> would seem to rule out any direct identification between him and the mulatto of legend. It is much more probable that this Bishop was using the term "illegitimate" in a strict canonical sense to denote a child not born in Christian wedlock. Considering how infrequently Catholic priests had visited Warri, it is very possible that Sebastian's senior son had been borne by a wife to whom he was not wedded by the rites of the church.

Whatever his parentage, Domingos was sent to Portugal in 1600 bearing a letter from his father to King Philip III. In the letter Sebastian expressed his desire that his son should be educated and instructed in European ways, so that he might help his father in the conversion of the Itsekiris and with the government of his kingdom. By order of Philip III the Prince of Warri, as Domingos was styled in Portugal, was given a pension and sent to study in the Hieronymite college at Coimbra.<sup>4</sup> After two years there he was permitted to transfer to the Augustinian college in Lisbon<sup>5</sup> and later to the Jesuit college in the same city.<sup>6</sup> Altogether his studies lasted some eight years and were ended by letters from his father recalling him. It was some time before the Viceroy and Council of Portugal would recommend his return to Philip III, but at last, deciding that he had been sufficiently educated, they made arrangements for his passage. Before he left Portugal Domingos took two important steps. Firstly, he married a Portuguese noblewoman, a niece of the Conde da Feira. Secondly, he presented to the King a number of petitions for the

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1. Brasio, A. *op.cit.* vol. VI. Lisbon, 1955. p.542.

2. Lloyd, P. C. "The Portuguese in Warri". *Odu* no. 4. p.31. The tradition is associated with the Olu Oyenakpara "around whom are built all the stories of contact with the Portuguese".

3. e.g. Brasio, A. *op.cit.* vol.V. Lisbon, 1955. p.438.

4. *ibid.* p.40. Royal instruction dated 16 September 1602.

5. Brasio, A. *op.cit.* vol.V. p.123. Letter from Philip III, 17 July, 1604.

6. *ibid.* p.170. Letter from Viceroy of Portugal, 18 March, 1606.

benefit of trade and Christianity in Warri, no doubt following in these particulars instructions received from his father. In the words of the royal decree:<sup>1</sup>

“Considering what great service to God and myself would follow the opening of the ports, commerce and trade of the Kingdom of Warri on the coast of Guinea, both in the establishment of divine worship and in the promulgation of our holy Catholic faith, by bringing to a true knowledge of it the inhabitants of the said kingdom and the infidels and idolaters of those parts. . . .”

Philip III directed that his subjects should henceforth be allowed to trade in Warri on the same terms as in the Congo. He also promised to look into the possibilities of increasing that trade by the export of black peppers and other spices.

All this may have helped the Itsekiri, although more than a royal decree was needed to tempt merchants to a dubious source of profit. But as for the purposes which had led the Bishop of São Tome to send Domingos to Portugal, it seems that the prince had disappointed the hopes of his sponsors that he would prove a suitable candidate for ordination. A later Bishop had a very poor opinion of him, writing, “But this son, although he received the greatest favours from His Catholic Majesty, neglected his studies and returned to his home after marrying a Portuguese noblewoman”.<sup>2</sup> Certainly his marriage put an end to all prospects of ordination, but Domingos did undertake a pilgrimage to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela and managed to have the Order of Christ conferred on himself, his father and one of his brothers; moreover he had been put through a very thorough Catholic education that must have left its mark on him. Nor did he entirely neglect the cause of Christianity in his native land, for he obtained from Phillip III the despatch of three priests, especially chosen by the King’s chaplain, for the service of the church in Warri, together with all the necessary vestments and ornaments. After much seemingly deliberate delay, Domingos at last left Portugal with a sizeable retinue—his wife, a chaplain and ten servants, four of whom had been made knights hidalgo of the Portuguese royal household. He had been absent from Warri for more than ten years.<sup>3</sup>

On the return of Domingos, his father proclaimed him heir to the throne, in the hope, according to the Bishop of São Tome, that his instruction in the Catholic faith would enable him to maintain and develop Christianity in Warri.<sup>4</sup> Again the hopes of Olu and Bishop

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1. *ibid.* p.360. Text of royal decree regulating trade between Warri and the Portuguese subjects of Philip III, 23 November, 1607.

2. Brasio, A. *op.cit.* vol. VI, p.542.

3. A fuller account of this episode in Ryder, A. F. C. “*The Story of Dom Domingos*”, *Odu* no.4. pp.33-39.

4. Brasio, A. *op.cit.* vol. VI, p.543.

appear to have been disappointed. Domingos' Portuguese wife died within a few years of her arrival in Warri and he afterwards began to evince some hostility towards the Portuguese. It is not known in what year he finally ascended the throne: as late as 1620 Sebastian was still alive though "worn out with extreme old age".<sup>1</sup> However, it is almost certain that Domingos did eventually become Olu of Warri.

Apart from the most unusual career of Domingos, the reign of his father Sebastian probably represents the high-water mark of Portuguese missionary activity in Warri. Thanks to the efforts of Francisco de Villanova, the energetic Bishop who sent Domingos to Portugal, a resident priest was maintained in Warri almost until 1616. When a new Bishop of São Tome, Pedro da Cunha, arrived in his diocese in that year he received a request from Sebastian for another priest to replace the one who had died in Warri shortly before. This he was unable to do because among the clergy of São Tome he could find no volunteer for the post: "No one, he wrote, could be found willing to reside there permanently because of the poverty of the King and kingdom".<sup>2</sup> The clergy of São Tome on this and other occasions showed up in a very bad light. As for the three priests who returned with Domingos some years earlier, it must be assumed that they had all died or departed.

After his failure to find a resident priest, the Bishop was driven back on the old expedient of sending one on a trading ship with leave to return in the same vessel. Perhaps the man who went on these terms found Warri more attractive on close acquaintance, for he remained there for over a year. Meanwhile the Bishop had hit upon another idea for overcoming the obstacles which the poverty of Warri was placing in the way of missionary activity there. He turned to the King of Spain and Portugal and exhorted him to provide at least one priest for Warri paid an adequate stipend from the royal exchequer so that, in his own words, "the poverty of the kingdom may not bring so many souls to perdition".<sup>3</sup> His petition was fruitless: Spain was desperately short of funds. Incidentally, the alleged chronic poverty of the Itsekiri, if not a device to evade the burden of maintaining missionaries, demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the royal decree designed to stimulate trade. Deprived of the regular assistance of a priest, Sebastian, despite his advanced age, took the ecclesiastical burden on his own shoulders. Many Portuguese traders visiting Warri reported to the Bishop that he was himself instructing his people in the Christian doctrines and arranging religious processions with the greatest devotion.

Given this enthusiasm in the Olu himself and the fairly regular support that had been given by the church in São Tome and Portugal

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1. *ibid.* p. 542.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

during his long reign, how deep an impression had Christianity made on the Itsekiri? According to Bishop Pedro da Cunha, writing in 1620, when Sebastian was still alive, it had made very little real progress.<sup>1</sup>

“Outside the small town of Santo Agostinho there are no other Christians; and even in the town only a minority are of the Catholic faith. Although very many of them are nominally Christian, true Christianity is almost wholly confined to the King and the Prince (i.e. Dom Domingos); the rest only call themselves Christians in order to please the King. They take their children to baptism only with the greatest reluctance, believing that a baptised child will die immediately. The majority of men take wives without the sacrament of matrimony, they circumcise their children and practise superstitious rites and sorcery”.

So far as is known the Bishop was not speaking from first-hand experience, yet there are good grounds for accepting his picture of Christianity in Warri as very much a court religion, superficially accepted in the capital and not at all outside.

After this episcopal report of 1620, there is a considerable gap in our information caused by the collapse of Portuguese and Spanish influence in West Africa before the attacks of the Dutch. The whole cause of Roman Catholicism in the missionary field was, of course, intimately bound up with Spanish and Portuguese political supremacy, which in West Africa was overcome by Protestant powers. From the 1620s until the middle of the century the traffic between São Tome and Warri dwindled to vanishing point<sup>2</sup> and the governments concerned found it impossible to maintain their overseas ecclesiastical and missionary establishments. The extent of the disintegration may be judged from the situation in 1650 when the Bishops of São Tome and Angola were both dead and had not been replaced. In São Tome itself there remained only six priests, and in Principe there were none at all.<sup>3</sup> However, Domingos, if the Itsekiri traditions associated with Oyenakpara do in fact refer to him,<sup>4</sup> did keep alive the Christian tradition of his line after his accession to the throne which cannot have occurred much later than 1620 considering the great age of his father. Another factor which may have helped to maintain the faint Catholicism of the Itsekiri was Dutch neglect of that kingdom: they found the port relatively inaccessible and the trade unprofitable,<sup>5</sup> with the result that it was the one trading

1. *ibid.*

2. ref. Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon, cod.52.VIII.58. fol.239.

3. A.S.C. *Scritture Riferite*, vol.249. Africa III. fol.328 et seq.

4. Despite obvious telescoping of persons and events, Domingos does appear to be the central figure of the Oyenakpara traditions. ref. Lloyd, P. C. *op.cit.*

5. Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague. *Oude West Indische Compagnie*.11. *Brieven en papieren van de Kust van Guinea*, 1634, 1645-1647, 1648. nos.16, 45, 63.

port on the coast that remained open to the surviving trickle of Portuguese trade. From the Itsekiri point of view this meant that their Portuguese connection became more rather than less valuable.

The thread of events can be picked up again with some certainty in the 1640s by using the archives of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide established in Rome in 1622 in order to direct all missionary activity of the Roman Catholic church. From 1640, that is, after the Portuguese break with Spain, the Congregation began to take an interest in missionary work in areas formerly under Portuguese domination. Resurgent nationalism in Portugal suspected this interest as a veiled Spanish attempt to infiltrate into Portuguese areas of influence, especially since Rome, at the instigation of Spain, refused until 1668 to recognise the independent government of Portugal, so the King of Portugal refused to admit the authority of the Congregation within his dominions. Such an attitude was to prove a grave handicap to the revival of Catholicism in Warri because the Portuguese authorities were constantly putting difficulties in the way of missionaries sent there by the Congregation, while Portugal itself was for many years unable to resume its independent missionary work. Yet, despite these additional obstacles, the reputation of Warri as the sole state between Elmina and the Congo in which relatively encouraging progress had been made at the beginning of the century was sufficient to inspire renewed efforts from Rome in mid-century.

The first sign of redirected activity appears in a report to the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide written in December 1640 by a French missionary, Father Columbin of Nantes.<sup>1</sup> He and his companions had been engaged in missions on the Guinea coast since 1634, during which time they had visited Warri and found that the ruler was a Christian and that many of his subjects had been baptised, but were perforce living in pagan fashion from lack of priests. Father Columbin, whose sentiments were vigorously anti-Portuguese, urged that Rome send missionaries to the rescue of these Itsekiri Christians. Only four years later a Dutch visitor to Warri, recorded in Olfert Dapper's *Africa*, found a church and an altar complete with a picture of Christ on the Cross, St. Mary and the Apostles, and two altar candlesticks; he also saw many people entering the church rosary in hand.<sup>2</sup> This is the first mention of a church in Warri. There was no such building in 1597, so it is probable that the one seen by the Dutchman was built during the reign of the Olu Sebastian. Of course it may have been only a makeshift edifice and there will be more to say about churches in Warri. Nevertheless, the impressions of Father Columbin and the Dutchman around 1640 do suggest that,

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1. A.S.C. IV. *Lettere di Germania, Francia, Fiandraea, Inghilterra, 1641*. vol.83. fol. 379-80.
  2. Dapper, O. *Naukerige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten*. Amsterdam, 1668. p.508.

while Catholicism in Warri may have been full of shortcomings, it was a tougher plant than Bishop da Cunha had judged it in 1620.

Dapper's informant also reveals that the ruler of Warri in 1644 was a half-caste named Dom Antonio Domingos whose father Domingos had married a Portuguese. Bishop da Cunha had written that Domingos' European wife died childless, but although the Bishop's report was written much nearer the event, Dappers' assertion that Antonio Domingos was a mulatto and the son of his father's Portuguese wife seems effectively to prove the Bishop wrong, unless Domingos had managed to find a second Portuguese wife. Whatever the truth of this, it is clear that the line of Catholic kings of Warri had continued and that the reigning Olu was half Portuguese by blood.

On such foundations missionary activity revived in the 1650s under the direction of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide. At the outset a curious confusion arose as a result of the transfer of initiative from Portugal to Rome and the refusal of the Portuguese to co-operate with foreign missions. Lacking accurate information, the Roman authorities came to confuse Warri with Benin.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the first mission which the Sacred Congregation despatched to this area went to Benin instead of Warri in the belief that the Oba was a Christian. Having reached Benin in 1651 with great difficulty, the Capuchin mission had no success whatsoever and was finally expelled for interrupting a religious ceremony. Not until the survivors reached the island of Principe did they realise that their efforts had been misdirected, for there they heard, apparently for the first time, of the Christian community in Warri. They learned too that for many years past this community had had to rely upon the services of priests who came with the annual trading ship to baptise and marry, and that even this irregular assistance had failed, for no Portuguese ship had been to Warri for over seven years. Meanwhile the Olu, probably Antonio Domingos, had for five years been living with a wife whom he was unable to marry.<sup>2</sup>

The seven year spell was in fact broken while the Capuchins were in Principe. A Portuguese ship bound for Warri put in there, so they seized the opportunity to ask the Governor's permission to embark on it. Unfortunately, being Spaniards they were subjects of an enemy power, so the Governor of the island had to refuse their request.<sup>3</sup> They were sent instead to São Tome where they came up against the same difficulty when they tried to reach Warri on another

1. I have found 18th century documents confusing Benin and Dahomey e.g. A. T. T. *Livreria*. cod. 1115. Father Columbin had not been a model of clarity on this point.
2. A. S. C. *Scritture Riferite*. vol.249. Africa III. fol. 328 et. seq. Reports from the Capuchins engaged on this mission.
3. After the Portuguese rising against the Spaniards in 1640, peace was not signed between the two countries until 1668.

Portuguese ship. The Governor of São Tome at this time was doing his best to revive the missionary work of the Portuguese Crown in Warri, but he looked in vain among the clergy of the island for a priest willing to go there with this same ship: even his offer of a considerable money payment and five slaves tempted no one. In the end he had to send the sacristan, who was a native of Warri, to assure the Olu of his good intentions. By some means or other the Spanish Capuchins must have succeeded in getting a letter to the Olu informing him of their abortive mission in Benin and their failure to reach his kingdom, for the Olu wrote a letter to the Pope dated "Oery city of Santo Agostinho 20 November 1652" in which he makes reference to the Spanish mission. He also offers to the Pope the obedience of himself and his kingdom, a step very likely suggested by the Capuchins. This letter is written in Portuguese and parts of it are worth quoting, for it has not been published and it must be the oldest surviving letter written by a Nigerian.<sup>1</sup>

"I have been informed of the fervent zeal that burns in the breast of Your Holiness to spread the Holy Faith in these parts, which, because they have not been watered by the blood of Jesus Christ or any apostle or saint, are deprived of the light of the faith. Also I have heard that to remedy this Your Holiness despatched a mission of fathers called Capuchins to the Kingdom of Benin, a people neighbouring mine, who rejected the favour offered them and expelled the fathers from their Kingdom; nor did they tell the fathers anything about me and my Kingdom. I truly believe, Holy Father, that Your Holiness intended these priests to come to me, judging by their information that the King of Benin was a Christian who desired ministers of the Gospel. I am that king, and my kingdom is on the same coast adjoining Benin and distinguished from it only by the fact that mine is called Oery. Such is my need of disinterested ministers to spread the faith in my kingdom that it has almost gone to perdition, for it is more than seven years since a priest has been here, and those who used to visit came only once a year and remained only so long as the pinnacle from São Tome was trading here. I wondered that none came for so long: they tell me that they have no bishop in São Tome and so few priests that they are in almost the same straits as myself. I leave it to Your Holiness to imagine how many are falling away from the Faith. I am acting as a preacher myself, as far as I am able, urging my subjects to trust in the mercy of God that all will soon be set in order. This can only be done, I believe, by Your Holiness. I beg you therefore by the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ to come to my aid and send me a mission of Capuchin fathers who because they are disinterested (as I am informed) will do great good to me and my kingdom. As a faithful Christian I kneel and kiss the feet

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1. A.S.C. *Scrittura Riferite* vol.249. Africa III.

of Your Holiness, and, like other Christian kings, I offer to Your Holiness the obedience of myself and my kingdom, and not to Your Holiness alone, but to all who shall afterwards be elected canonically to that dignity. Again I beg Your Holiness to send me the fathers as soon as possible, and, if possible, to instruct the Prefect of the fathers in Portugal to see that every year some priests are sent with the ships that come from Lisbon to São Tome, and from there to my kingdom to trade. I will give them all the help in my power and reliable interpreters so that they may bring my neighbour, the King of Benin, and others to the faith. I beseech Your Holiness to send me some relics for myself and my kingdom.

I am writing to my cousin King John of Portugal asking him to help me by assisting the fathers with their passage and the necessary provisions. I believe he will do this for the Portuguese have often done me favours; also, because they introduced the faith into my kingdom and my forbear King Dom Domingos married a Portuguese lady, I hold them in great brotherly affection. . . .”.

Enlightened by this letter and by reports from the Spanish missionaries, and encouraged by the apparent zeal of the Olu, the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide in 1655 prepared another mission. It was again composed of Capuchins, but, in order to lessen the difficulties with Portugal, they were Italians instead of Spaniards. This time the mission was designated as the mission for Benin and Warri:<sup>1</sup> Father Giovanni Francesco Romano was appointed Prefect. It was probably in 1656 that the Prefect was despatched to Lisbon with four companions and a letter from the Sacred Congregation to the Olu. For some reason the Portuguese government refused to let the Prefect sail, so he handed over his authority to one of his companions, Father Angelo Maria d’Aiaccio. From São Tome Father Angelo Maria went to Warri with one companion, Father Bonaventura da Firenze. The Olu received them very cordially and at their instance married an important half-caste from São Tome who had been brought up in his court.<sup>2</sup> Whether this girl was the wife with whom he had been living for five years is not revealed. Probably she was not, for the missionaries reported that they had persuaded the Olu to put aside his other wives: an example followed by many of his chiefs and subjects who likewise accepted the sacrament of marriage. Altogether the Fathers Angelo Maria and Bonaventura spent four years in Warri travelling about the kingdom and, according to their own estimation, making great progress with the conversion of the Itsekiri who readily embraced the new religion.

1. A.S.C. *Acta*, 1655, 15 June, 1655.

2. Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, G.A. *Istorica Descrittione de tre Regni Congo, Matamba et Angola* etc. Milan, 1690, pp.481-3.

Portuguese suspicion of foreign interference in the only port left open to them put an end to this mission. Already in 1657 the Governor of São Tome had arrested an Italian whom he had permitted to accompany the Capuchins to Warri in the belief that he intended to become a missionary there.<sup>1</sup> When he returned almost immediately he was accused of spying on trade and a search of his baggage revealed several samples of local produce. After their four years in Warri, Fathers Angelo Maria and Bonaventura returned to São Tome and they too were arrested and suspended from their mission by the Vicar General of the island on the grounds that they had no proper commission from the Pope.<sup>2</sup> Although the Portuguese government did not recognise the authority of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, the charge was a trumpery one, and after their case had been transferred to Lisbon they were cleared of all charges and instructed by the Portuguese government to return to their mission. Father Angelo Maria was very ready to go back and asked the Sacred Congregation for more priests to develop the promising mission in Warri. Eight Capuchins were accordingly appointed in November 1663, but the Portuguese government refused them passports. Nor did the Governor and Chapter of São Tome succeed in filling the gap with visiting priests. Instead a renewed decline of trade between Warri and the islands left the mission abandoned for several years.

It was the Olu himself who attempted to keep Christianity alive by appealing for help to the King of Portugal. In a letter dated 20 October 1673<sup>3</sup> he informed the King that more than ten years had passed since the Chapter of São Tome had sent any priest to Warri, which means that hardly anything had been done since the departure of Father Angelo Maria. Consequently, the Olu said, many of the Itsekiri converted by the Capuchins had returned to paganism. He went on to affirm, erroneously but significantly, that kings of Portugal had in the past ordered their subjects to trade with Warri in order to help the Itsekiri against their pagan neighbours—a striking association of religion, trade and politics—but now Portuguese ships touched at Warri only every three years or so, and then only in passage. At the time of writing, however, a Portuguese Franciscan, Father Sebastian dos Reis, had arrived in Warri, so the Olu appealed to the King of Portugal to assist in reviving the mission by sending more priests and directing trade to his kingdom. By February 1675 the Portuguese Council for Overseas Affairs had finished deliberating on this letter with the conclusion that the Bishop of São Tome should

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1. Arquivo Historico Ultramarino, Lisbon. (afterwards referred to as A.H.U.) *São Tome*. caixa 2. 13 May 1657. Letter from the Governor of São Tome to the King of Portugal. The Governor was also perturbed by the increasing importation of guns into Warri.
  2. A.S.C. *Acta*. 1663. 16 April, 1663.
  3. A.H.U. *São Tome*. caixa 2. *Consulta* dated 5 February, 1675.

be instructed to send priests to Warri and a letter be sent to the Olu telling him to see that they were well treated. As for trade, the government could not compel its subjects to trade in any place, so the Council could only advise the Olu to make the trade more attractive. That nothing came of either the Olu's request or the Council's instruction to the Bishop reveals very clearly how missionary activity depended on regular and profitable trade.

Thus, after the departure of Father Angelo Maria missionary work virtually ceased for more than twenty years, to be renewed by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide once contentions between Rome and Portugal had been smoothed away. In March 1683 the King of Portugal informed the Bishop of São Tome that the Italian Prefect of the Capuchin mission in Angola was sending priests to the Costa da Mina, Benin and Warri, and that São Tome was to be their base.<sup>1</sup> The following year Father Francesco da Monteleone duly arrived in the island to see to the building of a hospice, but it was only in 1686 that six Capuchins were sent to assist him, and three of these died almost immediately. Meanwhile, in 1685, the Olu of Warri had again petitioned the King of Portugal to send missionaries; he also sent three Itsekiri youths to São Tome to be taught by Monteleone. In 1689 the Prefect at last managed to reach Warri and spend a whole year there.<sup>2</sup> His efforts to visit Benin were frustrated by the war then being waged between that kingdom and Warri, but he did get in touch with the Urhobo<sup>3</sup> and made some impression among them. In Warri itself he baptised one of the most important Itsekiri women with all her household, while the Olu gave him a piece of land near the palace for a church and house which the ruler himself promised to have built. After a year of considerable success, Monteleone's duties as Prefect obliged him to return to São Tome, so he promised the Olu that a permanent mission would be sent, and in August 1691 he despatched three priests under the leadership of his Vice-Prefect, Father Giosepppe Maria de Busseto.<sup>4</sup> If Monteleone is to be believed, Father Giosepppe Maria was not an ideal missionary, for he represents him as a vain cantankerous man, given to writing to the King of Portugal to complain of his superiors, and a great lover of creature comforts; above all he heartily disliked the idea of going to Warri.

Soon after the Warri mission had left São Tome, Monteleone received invitations from the rulers of Bonny and Calabar asking

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1. A.H.U. cod.489 *Registo de officios para São Tome e Cabo Verde, 1673-1716*. fol. 38r. 20 March, 1683.
  2. A.S.C. *Scritture riferite nei Congressi, Africa, Angola, Congo, Senegal. a. 1686-92*. vol.2. fol.479r-480v. 25 April, 1691. Monteleone to Sacra Congregazione.
  3. Monteleone calls them "Oribboo gentili di Benij". *ibid*.
  4. *ibid*. fol.501. Letter appointing Father Giosepppe Maria Vice-Prefect of the Warri mission. São Tome, 25 July, 1691.

him to preach in their towns.<sup>1</sup> He was anxious to accept these invitations both for the sake of spreading Christianity in Bonny and Calabar and also because he thought it would be easier to sustain the Warri mission from Calabar which was much more frequented by Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish ships than was Warri. He was told that local communication between Calabar and Warri would present no difficulty. Such hopes were doomed to early disappointment, and even the mission in Warri achieved far less than was expected of it. One of the priests, Father Bernardino di Tavera, spent only two months there without, in the words of Monteleone's report, "performing a single act connected with his mission".<sup>2</sup> Instead he devoted his time to buying "cloths woven from straw" from the Olu and chiefs in exchange for tobacco. When the ship which had brought him left Warri, Father Bernardino and his stock of cloth left with it; but he did not live to reap the profit of his enterprise for he died while the ship was still in the Benin River. Father Gioseppe Maria died in August 1692, a year after his arrival, and the survivor, a Father Protasio, left in the following month on the same ship which had been delayed all this time in the Benin River. The Olu and the Itsekiri chiefs did their utmost to persuade Father Protasio to remain, but he argued that it was impossible for him to remain alone in Warri and that he must go to São Tome to ask the Prefect for a companion. Monteleone indeed told the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide that the Olu would not have permitted Father Protasio to leave had he not given his promise to return—a promise which he did not keep, for he was sent instead to the island of Principe to replace a missionary who had fled to the West Indies aboard a French pirate ship.

With him Father Protasio had brought a letter to Monteleone: it was written in Portuguese by the Olu who signed himself Dom Domingos II. It is an interesting document; translated literally it reads as follows:

"I received a letter from Your Excellency written on 15th August last year, and with it came the Reverend Fathers to the very great joy of myself and my chiefs. We gave thanks to God for them. But as there is no perfect happiness in this life, it was the misfortune of myself and my subjects that we were not able to do so much as we would have wished for these Reverend Fathers, although we have always shown them every due regard and assisted them as far as our resources allow, as Your Excellency knows. I realise that it could not meet with their entire satisfaction, nor be according to their deserts.<sup>3</sup> At any rate Your

1. *ibid.* fol.553r-v. Letter from Monteleone, São Tome, 19 March, 1692. fol. 587v. Copy of the Letter from the "King" of Calabar.

2. A.S.C. *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi a. 1693-1710.* vol.3. fol. 37-39. 4 April, 1693.

3. Here there seem to be echoes of complaint from the table-regarding Father Gioseppe Maria. The Olu had undertaken to supply the priests and their servants with food. *ref.* Appendix.

Excellency must know that matters here are in such a state that everyone is suffering in some degree because the Ijaw are stopping me from going to Benin, and my subjects are unable to cultivate their farms, which is a great hardship. As I have already remarked to Your Excellency, there is no perfect happiness in this life, and my misfortune has given me further proof of this in the loss of those two servants of God, Father Gioseppe Maria and Father Bernardino. I have felt their loss deeply, and now I have to lament the departure of Father Protasio because he finds himself without a companion. Neither my persuasions and prayers nor those of my chiefs have been able to dissuade him from his determination to leave, although I told him that he and I could write to Your Excellency so that a companion might be sent at the first opportunity to help him. He replied that he wished to go in person to fetch this companion and that he did not wish to remain here alone, for it was against his conscience. Since in such matters only prayers and humility are of any avail, I have employed both to the best of my ability. But it did not please God that I should attain my desire. Now with the same prayers and humility I ask Your Excellency, as my spiritual father and father of this mission, to be like a good shepherd and not forget his sheep. Although all may go astray if they do not hear the pipe of the good shepherd, he will not for that reason let one be lost utterly, but will leave the ninety-nine and seek it. I well know that the Reverend Fathers will make many accusations against us, but everyone, including Your Excellency, knows full well how little help we have received from the Fathers for many years past, and how few labourers there have been in this vineyard, so it is naturally full of blemishes. But if the work goes forward without interruption, it will undoubtedly bear fruit. The Reverend Father has promised me that he will come back, if God so wills and Your Excellency approves. His companion or companions should be of his age and disposition so that they may bear the fatigue and labour of the service of God and the conditions of life in this land. As Your Excellency will learn, the hospice is almost complete after our manner of building, and I shall begin the construction of a church on the plan that the Reverend Father has left me. May God be pleased to bring him back so that he may see it finished and praise the Lord therein”.<sup>1</sup>

Monteleone did not hold back Father Protasio from any lack of zeal for the mission in Warri, but because only two remained alive of the eight priests who had joined him only three years earlier. Thus it was no longer possible for him to send two of them to Warri. As he himself exclaimed in a letter to the Sacred Congregation, “If the object of missions is to spread our Holy Faith, what does it profit to

1. A.S.C. *Scritture Riferite a 1693-1710*, vol.3, fol.38.

embark on missions and then send no missionaries?"<sup>1</sup> In the following year he gave proof of his own earnestness by undertaking, despite his poor health, a mission to Benin; but he died at Ughoton before he could reach the city.<sup>2</sup>

The arrival of a new body of Italian missionaries in São Tome brought some relief at this critical juncture. In 1696 two of them, Fathers Bonaventura da Brescia and Felice da Piagine, went to Warri where the latter fell gravely ill almost at once.<sup>3</sup> The documents concerning the further progress of this group are unfortunately lost, but it would not be unreasonable to conjecture that most of them were soon in their graves. If the missionary effort had to depend on priests brought from Europe, it is difficult to imagine how it might have been maintained without losses far beyond the strength of the missionary orders. On the other hand, there are indications that the Portuguese government was resuming its active interest in the coastal missions when the instructions given to the Governor of São Tome in 1698 ordered him to see that there was always a priest resident in Warri.<sup>4</sup> Nor had the Itsekiri themselves lost all their Catholic enthusiasm. The Dutchman Nyendaël reported in 1701 that the Portuguese had a church in Warri,<sup>5</sup> which shows that Domingos II had kept his promise and completed the church designed by Father Protasio. From a later document we know that this church was dedicated to St. Anthony.<sup>6</sup> There is an Itsekiri legend according to which the Portuguese lived for a while at Ode Itsekiri in a quarter known as "Saton".<sup>7</sup> This name may very well be a slight corruption of San Antonio: alternatively it could originate from Santo Agostinho which was the name given to the Itsekiri capital by the missionaries. The former explanation seems most satisfying.

The next reasonably complete picture of the state of Catholicism in Warri comes from a visitation made there in 1709 by a new Capuchin Prefect, Father Cipriano a Napoli, and it seems to reveal a marked decline since the visit of Monteleone twenty years earlier. Probably the Governor of São Tome had found it impossible to observe his instruction concerning the resident priest, for it has already been seen how difficult it was to persuade the clergy of São Tome to embark for the mainland. Also Domingos II may well have died in the interval and been succeeded by a less enthusiastic

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1. *ibid.* fol.105. Monteleone to Sacred Congregation São Tome. 14 June, 1694.
  2. *ibid.* fol.137-8. P. Angelico da Pettineo to Sacred Congregation. São Tome. 4 September, 1696.
  3. *ibid. loc.cit.*
  4. A.H.U. cod.1492. *Registro de officios relativos a S. Tome e Principe*. fol.125. 24 October, 1698.
  5. Bosman, W. *Nauwkeurige Beschryvinge van de Guinese Gout-Tand-en Slave-kust*. Amsterdam, 1704.
  6. A.H.U. *São Tome*. caixa 4. Governor of São Tome to King of Portugal. São Tome, 19 November, 1733.
  7. Lloyd, P. C. *op.cit.* p.28.

missioner. Yet large allowances must be made for the personality of the Prefect writing the report. Monteleone was undoubtedly an enthusiast who would have overlooked or pardoned many faults in a situation that was generally encouraging. Father Cipriano took a severer view of things, and was relatively new to the enormous problems of missionary labour in West Africa. With Father Polinara da Brescia he first visited Benin and concluded that nothing could be done there, so he took with him to Warri the priests originally intended for Benin. When he reached the Itsekiri capital he found that two of his Capuchins who had already spent a year there had been engaged in an extraordinary activity. In order to live they had been obliged to buy earthenware cooking-pots which were manufactured in Warri in large quantities; with the help of their two slaves they carried them into surrounding areas where they could be sold at a good profit. If they carried on this trade from genuine necessity, it was merely further proof of the inability of the Itsekiri to support a church and clergy from their own resources. They may, of course, have been led by less worthy motives such as moved Father Bernardino when he entered the cloth trade. However, the Prefect came to the conclusion that it would only be possible for missionaries to live in Warri if they engaged in the slave trade, and that, he declared, "is not only unworthy, but also absolutely contrary to our condition".<sup>1</sup> Such an attitude is in striking contrast to that adopted by the Portuguese authorities to the same question one century earlier. The Prefect was further disillusioned with the Warri mission because he found the people "obstinate, idolatrous and given to witchcraft and all sorts of abominable vices". The two missionaries already there had, in his opinion, made no progress, so he decided to withdraw entirely.

These findings of the Prefect are, to some extent, confirmed by a report made to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide in 1713 by a Father Filippo Calvello on his return to Europe. According to him there were great abuses in Warri which could not be remedied because the people were too devoted to idolatry.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, very possible that Father Filippo was one of the priests who had accompanied the Capuchin Prefect in 1709 and that his judgement was not an independent one. Certainly Father Cipriano's successor as Prefect of the Capuchins did not share his predecessor's gloomy view of missionary prospects in Warri, for with three companions he spent two years there between 1715 and 1717.<sup>3</sup> Moreover a Capuchin priest returned from São Tome reported to the Sacred Congregation in 1724 that there were many Christians in Warri, including

1. A.S.C. *Scritture Riferite*. . . Africa etc. vol.III. fol.475. São Tome, 20 January, 1710.

2. A.S.C. *Scritture Riferite*. . . Africa etc. vol.IV. fol.30.

3. A.H.U. *São Tome*, caixa 7. King of Portugal to Prefect. 9 September 1718.

the ruler, his court and all the chiefs, and that they were very zealous in their faith. For some time, he wrote, two Capuchins had been living in Warri, but now there were none, so that two more were needed with the necessary provision for their maintenance.<sup>1</sup>

From this varying testimony it is possible to conclude that the mission in Warri was well supported by resident priests during the second and third decades of the eighteenth century; better supported indeed than at any time since the early part of the previous century. Something had also been done to solve the problem of maintaining the missionaries. A decree of the Portuguese government issued in 1709 provided that the priests of the Warri mission should be given each year one pipe of wine, two barrels of oil, a cask of flour and two barrels of cowries. Naturally these provisions often never reached the missionaries, either through the negligence of royal officials, or because they were not available in São Tome. Things improved after 1731 when, in response to representations from the Governor of the island, the Portuguese government directed that the provisions should be sent from Brazil or, failing that, the missionaries should receive the equivalent value in money.<sup>2</sup>

In the fourth decade of the eighteenth century the mission suffered a severe setback following the death of the Olu who had encouraged it during the previous fifteen or twenty years. This Olu had styled himself Dom Agostinho and he died sometime between 1731 and 1733. One of his last acts was to write to the King of Portugal to explain that his kingdom stood in dire need of priests to administer the sacraments and that new statues were needed in the church because those sent earlier had been badly damaged.<sup>3</sup> Agostinho was succeeded by his brother who adopted a decidedly anti-Christian attitude. Services in the church ceased and the building came to be used as a shelter for animals. A statue of Christ that had been presented to the church by an inhabitant of Principe was smashed to pieces after it had failed to end a prolonged drought.<sup>4</sup> The new Olu also installed idols in his palace and, according to the Governor of São Tome, treated them with greater respect than the statues of the saints. This is so startling a departure from the attitude of the Olus over the previous century and a half that one is inclined to see in it a reflection of a drastic political upheaval in the Itsekiri kingdom. The Governor of São Tome reported all this to Lisbon, giving it as his opinion that the missionaries would now be able to make progress only by concentrating on the very young; even then they would be

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1. A.S.C. *Scritture Riferite* vol. IV. fol. 320. 3 July, 1724.

2. A.H.U. cod. 1492. *Registro de officios relativos a S. Tome e Principe*. fol. 19v. Royal decree dated 16 July, 1731.

3. A.H.U. cod. 478. *Consultas. S. Tome e Cabo Verde*. fol. 234r-v. 12 February, 1731.

4. A.H.U. *São Tome*, caixa 4. Governor of São Tome to King of Portugal 19 November, 1733.

wasting their time unless they were provided with a boat to carry them backwards and forwards to Warri, because it was useless to rely on merchant ships, and Europeans could not live for any length of time in Warri. Eventually the Portuguese government did give its approval for the building of such a ship.<sup>1</sup>

The change of ruler and attitude in Warri came at a time when the mission had been put upon a more secure and regular basis than at any time in the past. In particular the Portuguese government showed readiness to provide material support. Apart from the provision of a ship to transport the missionaries, the Superior of the Italian Capuchins in Portugal had given strong support to the last appeal of Dom Agostinho, representing to the King the great benefits that the Catholic religion and Portugal itself might derive from the Olu's declared intention of allowing no other nation to trade in Warri and admitting no missionaries other than those authorised by the King of Portugal.<sup>2</sup> Even Agostinho had not, of course, been actuated by pure love of Portugal. While the Itsekiri desperately needed to trade, the Dutch had decided that Warri was too inaccessible and unprofitable, and the Portuguese were paying less attention to the Bight of Benin now that they had established a flourishing slave-trading station at Whydah.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless the Portuguese Council for Overseas Affairs agreed with the Capuchin Superior that it would be in the interests of Catholicism and the possible development of Warri as a slave market to supply the Brazilian plantations, and also a means of winning influence with other states on the coast, to send missionaries to Warri with a number of suitable presents. The Superior suggested that the gift might consist of spirits, tobacco, a red hat trimmed with gold braid and some silks. Before news of Dom Agostinho's death reached Portugal these things were despatched by way of Brazil, together with four statues representing Christ, the Virgin, St. Anthony (the patron saint of the Warri church) and S. Lorenzo. Two priests accompanied these things, but got no farther than Bahia where they fell ill.

After some hesitation, the Governor of São Tome decided to send only the presents to the new Olu, fearing that the statues would not be decently housed or accorded due respect. So he despatched the presents in care of a priest, Father Francisco Maria, who also carried a letter to the Olu telling him about the statues and making the excuse that they could not be sent on that occasion for lack of shipping space. While awaiting them the Olu was urged to have a church

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1. *ibid.* Consulta of the Conselho Ultramarino. 19 August, 1735.

2. *ibid.* Consulta of the Conselho Ultramarino. undated.

3. *ref.* Ryder, A. F. C. "The Re-establishment of Portuguese factories on the Costa da Mina to the mid-eighteenth century". *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol.1. no.3. December 1958.

built suitable for their reception.<sup>1</sup> It may be imagined that the old church was by now in a ruinous state. Apparently neither the presents, nor the efforts of Father Francisco Maria, nor the promise of the statues changed the hostile attitude of the Olu. Within a few months Father Francisco reported to the Governor that he was making no progress and proposed to leave at the first opportunity. Thus the reign of this Olu (significantly he is one of the few for whom no baptismal name is recorded) apparently marks a hiatus in missionary activity lasting from about 1735 to a little before 1770.

The revival of the Warri mission at the end of the 1760s may plausibly be attributed to the accession of a new Olu, for about this time the ruler of Warri made repeated requests for missionaries to baptise and marry his subjects.<sup>2</sup> Because no missionaries were then available in São Tome, the Governor ordered the Chapter to send a canon: they chose a man of Itsekiri origin named João Alvarez and he duly went to Warri in 1770. Just at that time, however, an Italian Capuchin, Father Felix, arrived in the island and announced his willingness to undertake the mission. A new Governor was instructed, probably as a result of pressure from the Chapter, to see that Father Felix did not leave the island, but found on his arrival that an Italian living in Principe had already taken his fellow-countryman to Warri in his own ship. Thus Father Felix and canon João Alvarez were together in Warri.<sup>3</sup> They made an ill-assorted pair who found it impossible to work together. Early in 1771 Father Felix returned to São Tome full of complaints against the canon whom he accused of obstructing the progress of the mission by his bad example.<sup>4</sup> The Governor echoed his accusations, describing Alvarez as an "ignorant, dissolute and extremely ill-natured person" who while in Warri "indulged in such licentiousness, libertinism and strange business that even the inhabitants were scandalised, and to such a degree that they declared the Almighty had never intended negroes to be priests".<sup>5</sup> It was highly unfortunate that this son of Warri should have acquitted himself so ill, for the most satisfactory solution to the problem of finding resident missionaries would have been to train a body of native clergy. It is clear that a number of Itsekiri did obtain a theological training in São Tome, but they no doubt found benefices in the islands more attractive than mission work in their native land where they could not even be sure of the most modest living.

Besides demonstrating that Christianity was still alive among the Itsekiri, the mission of 1770 also reveals something about the church

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1. A.H.U. *São Tome*. caixa 4. Governor of São Tome to King of Portugal. 13 April, 1735 and Governor to Olu. 10 July, 1734.
  2. A.H.U. *São Tome*. caixa 7. Report on ecclesiastical affairs by Governor of São Tome. 1771.
  3. A.H.U. *ibid.* Governor of São Tome to King of Portugal. 3 November, 1770.
  4. A.H.U. *ibid.* Ouvidor of São Tome to King of Portugal. 28 February, 1771.
  5. A.H.U. *ibid.* Governor of São Tome to King of Portugal. 1771.

of St. Anthony in Warri. Despite its misuse after the death of Olu Agostinho, it must have survived in a sufficiently good condition to be repaired and revert to its original function. Father Felix brought its bell back with him because it had cracked; so it was passed on to Portugal for repair, the covering letter from the Governor of São Tome remarking that the furnishing of this church had always been looked upon as the especial responsibility of the Portuguese crown.<sup>1</sup>

The documentary evidence at present available does not carry the story very far beyond this point, although there is good reason to think that Portuguese missionaries sent from Brazil and encouraged by their government continued the work to good effect. When Captain Landolphe, a Frenchman, visited Warri in 1786 he saw in the middle of a large square a great cross illuminated by some fifty lamps. He was told that it had been placed there by Brazilian missionaries who had baptised the Olu "of that time" under the name of Manuel Otobia. These same missionaries had presented Manuel Otobia with a fine altar-piece carved to represent a crucifixion scene.<sup>2</sup> Yet Landolphe does not mention having seen a church. This Manuel Otobia may well have been the Olu who summoned Father Felix to Warri in 1770, but it is impossible to be certain whether he was the Olu reigning at the time of Landolphe's visits in 1786 and 1799. Captain John Adams, an Englishman who visited Warri probably around 1795, records that the ruler's name was Otoo (possibly from Otobia) and that he appeared to be about sixty years of age.<sup>3</sup> These circumstances certainly make it possible that he came to the throne about 1770, and Itsekiri tradition maintains that there was a long reign at the end of the eighteenth century. Of the evidences of missionary activity, Adams who, it must be remembered, was a Protestant seaman, had this to say:<sup>4</sup>

"On entering the first apartment of the palace, we were much surprised to see placed on a rude kind of table, several emblems of the Catholic religion, consisting of crucifixes, mutilated saints, and other trumpery. Some of these articles were manufactured of brass, and others of wood. On enquiring how they came into their present situation, we were informed, that several Black Portuguese missionaries had been at Warri, many years since, endeavouring to convert the natives into Christians; and the building in which they performed their mysteries we found still standing.

A large wooden cross, which had withstood the tooth of time, was remaining in a very perfect state, in one of the angles formed by two roads intersecting each other. We could not learn that

1. A.H.U. *ibid.* Governor of São Tome to King of Portugal, 15 March, 1771.
2. Quesne, J. S. *Mémoires du Capitaine Landolphe*. Paris, 1823. vol. I.
3. Adams, J. *Sketches taken during ten voyages to Africa between the years 1786 and 1800*. London, 1822. p. 36.
4. *ibid.* p.37.

the Portuguese had been successful in making proselytes; indeed, King Otoo's subjects appeared to trouble themselves very little about religion of any kind".

A little later Adams remarks that the Olu had over sixty wives.

On the whole these observations of Landolphe and Adams confirm the evidence of the documents. Adams' reference to "Black Portuguese missionaries" may relate to Canon Alvares or later African priests trained by the Portuguese in São Tome or Brazil; alternatively it may indicate half-caste priests from São Tome, for a large part of the population of that island was of mixed blood. For the rest, Landolphe's and Adams' descriptions show the Itsekiri holding with considerable tenacity to certain of the external rites and symbols of the Roman Catholic religion without abandoning their more important social customs.<sup>1</sup> That the Olu in 1795 had over sixty wives indicates that Christianity had lost much of its hold on its main prop within the Itsekiri state, that is the ruler and his court. Also it must be remembered that it never succeeded in reaching far beyond that central nucleus, which is not to deny that its secondary effects upon the religion and culture of the whole state may have been very considerable.

Itsekiri traditions hold that a good Olu, Erejuwa, was succeeded at the end of the eighteenth century by a son Akengbuwa who became a tyrant.<sup>2</sup> This tradition is supported by documentary evidence, for if Manuel Otobia was still reigning at the time of Landolphe's last visit in 1799, by 1807 he had been succeeded by an Olu whom the Governor of São Tome addressed as King João. The fact that the Governor uses a Christian name shows that the new Olu had at least been baptised; moreover the form of the Governor's letter makes it clear that he was writing to the Olu as a Christian ruler, but one who had lapsed from grace. The last paragraph reads as follows:<sup>3</sup>

"Your Highness, as a Christian king, ought to be a friend to the Christians, help them and defend them against those who are not Christians, especially the Ijaw, and not take heavy customs from them or allow the Captain of War and the chiefs to take more than they were paid in the past. When Your Highness shows favour to the Portuguese, I shall inform the High and Mighty Lord the Prince Regent of Brasil so that he may know that Your Highness is the true friend of all Portuguese who are his subjects".

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1. An interesting example of the survival of Christian rites in Warri is recorded by Lieut. King (*Journal des Voyages*, Tome XIII, Paris, 1823. p. 518). As late as 1820 when he was in Warri he saw "at Christmas a great procession which went from the town to a small village carrying a crucifix and some other symbols of Christianity".
  2. Lloyd, P. C. *The Itsekiri*. London, 1957. p. 180.
  3. A.H.U. cod.1495. *Registro de correspondencia do Governo de São Thome 1806-7*. fol. 154v-155v. 15 May, 1807.

These were vain hopes, and with them ended the story of Catholic missions in Warri until they were resumed at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the field of pre-nineteenth century Nigerian history the documentation available for the reconstruction of missionary activity among the Itsekiri is comparatively rich, and it has by no means been fully exploited in this study. It is, therefore, a potentially valuable approach to more than the matter to which it is immediately relevant. To take but one obvious example: the Itsekiri king-list is acknowledged to be extremely defective.<sup>1</sup> Missionary records cannot entirely remedy the defects because they consistently refer to the Itsekiri rulers by their baptismal names, yet from them it is possible to reconstruct a rough chronological outline stretching from the father of Sebastian in the 1580s to the Olu João in 1807. Such a chronology is no small gain as a first step towards the elucidation of Itsekiri history. The documents can, of course, lead further than this and should eventually provide the basis for an extremely interesting study of the interplay of internal politics with European trade and missionary activity.

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1. Lloyd, P. C. "*The Portuguese in Warri*". pp.30-31.

## APPENDIX

The following document is a privilege issued by the Olu of Warri in favour of Francesco da Monteleone and the Capuchin mission. The original, which is lost, was probably written in Portuguese, and the only surviving record is a Latin translation published in Michael à Tugio, *Bullarium Ordinis FF. Praedicatorum*. Rome, 1729, vol. VII, p.230. Somewhere in the recording chain the name of the Olu has been changed from Dom Domingos II to Luigi II, but there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the document.

We Don Luigi II, by the grace of God King of Oweri: Since this our kingdom has always lacked ministers of the Church, we have lived here like sheep without a shepherd; in truth there has been no curate of souls here other than a priest paying a short visit from year to year, and for many years now there has been no one at all to administer the holy sacraments of baptism, confession and others. Thus the people have been left without the arms of God and without any reminder of other blessings. But it came to our notice that in the city of São Tome was a Reverend Italian Capuchin, by name Father Francesco da Monteleone, who was zealous in the service of God and was doing wonders in that land, so we wrote to him that, moved by pity for our poor kingdom, he might let it partake of that same charity which he bestowed on others by sending to us one of his companions to administer the sacraments, in the same manner as in years past the Reverend Fathers Angelo Maria and other Capuchins had done when they came from Angola and bore themselves so excellently here that we still find many of our elders who praise them to us for their wonderful uprightness. For almost eight years we had lived in this manner without the sacraments, so that adults died without confession and infants without baptism, therefore, as a son of the Church and for the benefit of our land, we sent three youths to the aforesaid Father that he might instruct them in letters and virtue. Then, while we were awaiting a paternal reply, he appeared in person in this kingdom to our infinite delight: from the very first day of his arrival he began his works of piety with untiring zeal and true doctrine of heaven, never resting for a single day, so that we marvelled beyond all measure, for it seemed to us something new, something the other Fathers had never achieved. We welcomed him as a gift sent to us from Heaven, and all were filled with the dread pre-occupation of winning the salvation of our souls. When we asked him to remain with us, he replied that it was necessary for him to return to São Tome which he had left secretly; and he added that he was expecting other companions which the King of Portugal and Rome were sending, and that on the first occasion that offered he would send some of them to us in this kingdom. Hence a hospice was needed in which the Fathers

could live, as was the custom in other provinces. Therefore, we, with the assent of our chief Captain, the nobles of our Court and the other nobles and chiefs of the people, have determined to build such a hospice for the Italian Capuchins and to give it to the aforesaid Father with a grateful heart for the favours that he has thus far bestowed on us. To this end we commanded the Chief Captain and nobles to select with the aforesaid Father the site which would be most suitable for the construction of the hospice. They chose the street of S. Antonio to the right, where one leaves our palace; so full willingly, for now and always, we give to and bestow upon the said Italian Capuchin Fathers the whole site to the right of the aforementioned street of S. Antonio, to be used for the building of the church and hospice and as a garden. Also we undertake to build the said church and hospice at our own expense and with the greatest possible diligence, and to provide food for these Fathers and others who may dwell here in their service. Furthermore we promise to treat them with respect and honour, as befits their sacred habit, both by preserving their privileges from any infringement, and by obeying their orders. Thus we promise, swear and confirm. And in order that this may always be observed clearly and fully, we give these present, signed in our name and in the name of all the aforementioned nobles, and sealed with our seal in our royal chapel at Oweri, this day 16 January 1690.

D. Ludovico (sic) II, King of Oweri.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF KINGDOMS IN NEGRO AFRICA

*by*

ROBERT G. ARMSTRONG

ONE of the more striking features of African society, south of the Sahara Desert, is the presence there of numerous states or kingdoms. These are varied in size and internal structure, but some of them are large in area and include—or have included in historic times—quite large populations. Many students of Africa have thought, as I do, that this phenomenon, if correctly interpreted, bears important witness to the intellectual capacity of the African peoples. One does not have to like kingdoms—and I quite frankly do not like absolutisms—to see that it takes a high order of intelligence and political acumen to hold a million restive, diverse people together in one state—especially under the limitations imposed by pedestrian transport which characterized most of sub-Saharan Africa before the twentieth century. As one examines in detail the political and legal arrangements of a number of African kingdoms, one is driven to an increasing admiration for the sophisticated imagination for law and constitution to which these states bear witness.

The European students of Africa in the century or so before the first World War provided us with the first full-scale descriptions of these kingdoms; and their accounts often have a priceless documentary value today, despite the fact that the social sciences and the arts have come a long way since many of their books were written. Most of these Europeans took for granted the inferiority of the Negro peoples, and as a result what they wrote contained the unspoken assumption that nothing of interest could have been originated by the Negro peoples. Therefore when something of interest was found, the problem of science was to discover from where outside of Negro Africa the item in question had come. The century in question was the time of the archaeological re-discovery of the ancient Mediterranean world, especially in Egypt but also in North Africa generally; so Egypt was much on the minds of the early students of tropical Africa. It was quite natural then that Egypt should become the leading candidate for the honor of being the originator of African civilization generally. (I believe that one can speak of African civilization, in the Niger Valley in particular. It was an archaic civilization to be sure, but a real one). Other students assigned roles to the Carthaginians and to the Berbers in this connection.

This tendency in the end received explicit formulation in the so-called “Hamitic Hypothesis”, which Seligmann stated succinctly as follows:

"it would not be very wide of the mark to say that the history of Africa south of the Sahara is no more than the story of the permeation through the ages, in different degrees and at various times, of the Negro and Bushman aborigines by Hamitic blood and culture. The Hamitic were, in fact, the great civilizing force of Black Africa from a relatively early period. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The German sociologists took over this hypothesis and made it a special case of the more general "conquest theory of state formation", which had been developed by Gumplowicz, Oppenheimer, Thurnwald and others. According to this theory, all states have originated in the conquest of an indigenous, agricultural people by cattle-herding, more or less nomadic groups. By learning to control cattle, these groups learned to control people. It was thus apparent that original ethnic differences underlay the observed class distinctions of the historic states. Gumplowicz further emphasized the disparate, heterogenous nature of the groups which make up a state, and Oppenheimer made it very explicit that the machinery of force that is an essential part of every state, was instituted to protect the system of economic exploitation that the conquering overlords established. It is quite obvious that this double theory raises many fundamental issues for students of the political history of Africa.

Perhaps the first thing that must be said is that the theories are separable. One may believe in the essential soundness of the conquest theory of state formation without believing that all the conquests in Africa were made by Hamites. Similarly, one may believe that the Hamitic peoples of North Africa, the Central Sudan and the Eastern Horn have had a large cultural effect on the rest of Africa without believing in the conquest theory of state formation. The next thing that must be said is that in recent decades political science and anthropology have been looking with increasing scepticism on the conquest theory. Examples of conquest of sedentary peoples by more mobile peoples are not wanting in history—one wonders however, if the Norman Conquest of England has not provided an over-worked model for many theorists. One does not have to look far to discover states that have originated in other ways. The Spanish kingdom, for example, established itself in the course of *driving out* the alien, Moslem conquerors from Morocco. Political scientists in the United States tend to prefer MacIver's theoretical orientation, which emphasizes the importance of the services which the state performs. "The state is a common highway which serves us all". Lord Raglan, to name but one anthropologist, has recently published a vigorous critique of the conquest theory as such, saying, for example, that the Norman Conqueror does not even explain the origin of class society in England.<sup>2</sup> Behind the Hamitic Hypothesis many have thought they

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1. Seligmann, 1930, p.19.

2. Raglan, 1956, pp. 2-4.

detected racial prejudice.<sup>1</sup> Behind the Conquest theory, some have thought they saw an implicit defense of the legitimacy of the European aristocracies.

Modern anthropology, on the basis of a great body of experience, can no longer accept the notion that any group of people on earth is in principle incapable of making cultural innovations or of learning them. Quite the contrary, modern anthropology holds that all known human groups are so nearly alike in their innate mental endowment that our best tests cannot detect any organically conditioned differences or say what these differences may be if they exist. The various peoples on earth certainly have enormously different ways of life, but this heterogeneity is cultural, not racial or biological. That is to say it is due to the differing cultural histories of the various groups and to the varied landscapes in which these histories have unfolded. In particular the very real technological backwardness of Africa is seen as caused by the relative isolation of the main centers of Negro culture from the rest of the world. This isolation has resulted most importantly from the smoothness of the African coastline, which affords extremely few good harbors, none of which are backed up by navigable river systems. This coastline places the average square mile of the African continent three times as far from the ocean as is the average square mile of Europe. I could easily list another half dozen serious disadvantages of the African continent, from the point of view of transport and communication.

Given the basic assumption of modern anthropology, which may be called "the psychic unity of man", it is clear that the logic of the "Hamitic Hypothesis" must be re-examined. The first requirement of a serious modern approach is that linguistic categories and racial categories must not be confused. The word "Hamitic" is a recent formation from Biblical name of Ham, one of the sons of Noah, and it has usually been applied to Egypt. If it is to be given any sort of sensible meaning, it must be a linguistic category and be used to refer to those languages which are more or less closely related to ancient Egyptian. It cannot be given a sensible racial meaning for several reasons, the first of which is that it is non-exclusive. The Egyptians, ancient or modern are caucasoids of the Mediterranean variety, with a considerable proportion of Negroid mixture. In this they are not different from the south Europeans, for example. Lying at the point of junction of Europe, Asia and Africa, Egypt has almost certainly been a region of race mixture from the time that *Homo sapiens* first settled there. The researches of Greenberg and others have shown that the Egyptian language is related to four other families of languages; the Semitic languages, including Arabic, Hebrew and ancient Babylonian (Akkadian), the Cushitic languages of the Eastern Horn, including Somali, Galla, and Konso, the Berber languages of north and north-west Africa, and to a group of about thirty-five languages that may

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1. Saint-Clair Drake, 1959, pp. 215 ff.

be called Lake Chad Hamitic or Chadic, of which, the best known is Hausa and which include many very primitive tribes in the Nigerian Plateau. To my mind it is quibbling to call the Hausa people anything but Negroid, racially speaking, though to be sure they may have a somewhat larger proportion of Mediterranean, i.e. caucasoid, genes in their makeup than does the average Negro group. We are dealing in relative and imprecise categories; but if the Egyptians are caucasoid, then by the same token the Hausa are negroid. This is another reason why "Hamitic" cannot be a racial category, since the various Hamitic languages are spoken by both caucasoid and negroid peoples. Another group which is racially heterogeneous and about which there has been a great deal of romancing is the Fulani. The Fulani consist of two components, Negro and Berber. The Berber Fulani are peaceful herdsmen, indifferent Moslems, and often even Pagans. The Negro Fulani have historically been the city dwelling, agricultural group, fanatic Moslems and empire-builders. The Fulani language, common to both is now known to be a Negro language, closely related to Serer, Sin and Wolof, in Senegal, and more distantly related to such languages as Twi, Yoruba, Ibo and Tiv.<sup>1</sup> Whatever one thinks of Fulani imperialism, it cannot be taken as an example of Hamitic conquest or Hamitic political influence, since the political and militarily active Fulani have been Negro, both racially and linguistically.

There has been a great deal of loose talk, both in European and African circles, about particular groups having "infusions" of Hamitic blood, or about their being descended from one or another group of people, usually "Hamites". Often superior achievements in material culture are attributed to such ancestry, and Europeans have been especially prone to speak of certain African groups as containing a number of individuals of "a finer type"—by which is meant individuals who have a somewhat European-looking facial form and who seem handsome to the observer. Nobody has ever shown that such individuals differ significantly from their neighbors in performance on psychological tests, etc. There may of course be some proportion of caucasoid genes at work to produce the particular individuals one meets in any part of Africa. There is no unmixed race on earth. But most of this sort of argument is based on a logical and statistical fallacy. A set of body traits which are as different as possible from Nordic are united conceptually into a "pure Negro type", and individuals are sought out who have most of these traits. These are then considered "pure", and all other persons more or less "mixed". Actually there is not the slightest warrant for this procedure. From what we know of the history of man in Africa, it seems probable that there has always been the quite wide range of variation here that one

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1. Greenberg, 1955.  
Westermann, 1952, p. 253.

observes today. Since no human group has been subjected to the rigorous and protracted selection process by which in plant and animal breeding one develops lines which breed true for particular sets of traits, there is no warrant for declaring any set of traits in any human group to be "pure" or "true". People who worry about their ancestry for more than three or four generations are simply not considering the mathematics of ancestry.

Any discussion of the origins of African states must today be conducted in the light of fundamental, new information that has become available in the period since the War. It has now been demonstrated that most of the Negro languages of West Africa, south of the Desert, plus the whole of the Bantu language family form a great stock genetically related languages, to which Professor Greenberg gives the name "Niger-Congo Languages". The relationship of the Bantu languages to the western, or Niger Valley languages, is so close that Meinhof's reconstruction of Proto-Bantu can be used very handily as a guide to the ancient forms of the western languages. The other outstanding trait of the languages of West Africa is that they are very deeply divided from each other. The differences between them are so profound as to suggest strongly that they have undergone long periods of independent development. This suggests further that African Society is very old.

Recently Prof. Murdock, of Yale University, has published an impressive body of evidence to the effect that one of the earliest inventions of agriculture in the World took place in the upper Niger River Valley, some six or seven thousand years B.C. Some of the crops first developed there were guinea-corn (*Sorghum vulgare*), beniseed (sesame), fonio (*Digitaria exilis*), bulrush millet, okra, and perhaps even cotton. The people who live today in this region are the Mande, and they may very well be ancient there.<sup>1</sup> The work of Griaule, Dieterlen and their associates of the Musée de l'Homme has shown that close to this same region African groups such as the Dogon and Bambara developed cosmological systems of thought of astonishing range, complexity and sophistication. This fact too fits with the general picture that is now emerging.<sup>2</sup> The third development that we must notice is the discovery, by Henri Lhote and his associates, of an enormous number of rock paintings in the Hoggar and other parts of the Central Sahara.<sup>3</sup> These paintings show at least sixteen different styles, some of which have great antiquity, going back perhaps 8000 years. All the older paintings are clearly Negro in origin, some mixture of other racial groups is suggested in the more recent paintings. An astonishing range of animals is depicted, including elephants, giraffes, antelopes, ostriches: in fact

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1. Murdock, 1959, pp.22-27, 64 ff.

2. Griaule, 1951.

3. Lhote, 1958.

the whole typical fauna of the African savannahs. It is very obvious that the central Sahara was then much more hospitable than it is today. The most recent series of pictures concern a cattle-herding people, and show great herds of cattle. Lhote also says that great piles of cattle bones have been found and fossil tracks of very large herds. Lhote and others think that the herding people in question were Fulani, and there is some evidence to support this. He thinks that the development of large-scale herding may well have turned the ecological balance so that what had been a dry savannah became a great desert. One astonishing fact of the most recent of the paintings is that they include many pictures of horse-drawn chariots. Lhote says that these must be Egyptian, and says that over two hundred such paintings have been found. He thinks that there may have been a definite travel route from the Nile to the Niger at a date not more recent than 2000 B.C. Lhote says that the problem is to account for the extraordinary rapidity of the desiccation of the Sahara, since the earliest writers who describe it, Herodotus and Strabo, might as well have been writing about the modern desert.<sup>1</sup> The more the Sahara is studied in detail, the more evident it is that it has never been an absolute barrier. From early times it has been crossed by many routes of trade and contact. I would argue, however, that these routes have never been one-way streets. If we find a culture trait both in Egypt and in Nigeria, it does not follow that it originated in Egypt and spread to Nigeria. It may have originated in Nigeria and spread to Egypt. Or it may have originated at some third place and spread to both. We need serious archaeological work in the Sahara and in the Western Sudan, and painstaking study of the history of many particular items of material culture and social structure.

It is by now clear that there was in ancient Africa a large center of development of agriculture in the Niger Valley and another center in the Nile Valley. In between, in the Sahara region there must have been quite large Negro populations, engaged at first mainly in hunting, but later on in agriculture. (This is shown by some of the rock paintings). It is interesting that none of the rock paintings show warlike activities. With the increasing desiccation of the Sahara, which cattle-herding may well have accelerated, many of the Negro groups may have moved southward into regions that still had a savannah-type ecology. The active commerce across the Sahara throughout its long history bespeaks the productive vigor of both the north African and the Sudanic societies. England and France have been neighbors for two thousand years without losing their individuality. Similarly the Sudanic societies have preserved their distinctive characteristics despite millenia of contact with North Africa.

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1. Personal conversation with the writer.

Another possible approach to the problem of the origins of the states of Negro Africa is the comparative method. We may examine the constitutional structures of representative African kingdoms and ask whether what we observe could have arisen as a result of local or regional processes, or whether we must look far afield to find outside influences to account for what we see. We may also ask whether the states are sufficiently similar that a unitary explanation of their origin is plausible, or whether they are so dissimilar that even though it were shown that they all in fact originated in conquest by one people the explanatory problem would in the main still lie before us: How did they get to be the way they are? Professor Murdock, in his recent, extremely useful book, says that in his opinion, "... the states of Negro Africa appear essentially as similar as peas in a single pod". This has, "... led the author to his conclusion of the essential uniformity and single origin of despotic states in Negro Africa".<sup>1</sup> He gives a formidable list of eighteen similarities that go all through sub-Saharan Africa and says that he thinks the region of origin of this pattern is probably the Niger Valley, and that some of the patterns involved in the complex have probably come from Egypt. I shall not comment here on all the items in his list, but I must respectfully dissent and say that I think that the apparent similarity of these kingdoms results from the distance from which they are viewed. When they are examined in detail, many of the similarities vanish; and some points of similarity appear which are not on Murdock's list. Many of his points of similarity seem to me an almost inevitable consequences of medium-to-large scale political organisation. For example, his No. 5. "Insignia of office. Royal status is symbolised by the possession of distinctive regalia, among which stools, drums and animal tails are especially common". There must in fact be very few human groups which do not give some sort of insignia to high officials. The particular items on the list of insignia have, it is true, a widespread distribution in Africa, but not including Egypt, for the most part. His No. 9 is, "Harems. The ruler is invariably surrounded by a large number of wives and concubines". It is hard to see how this could not be the case in a continent where polygyny is nearly universal. What is somewhat distinctive is the systematic way in which the king uses these marriages politically by marrying wives from and daughters into the most important political groups of the kingdom. He thus becomes the centre of a national kindred, being both son-in-law and father-in-law to a large number of groups. There is nothing distinctive as such about political marriages, however. His first point is, "Monarchical absolutism. Each king or independent paramount chief enjoys absolute power, at least in theory". The last phrase is the key one. Really absolute monarchs or despots are quite rare in Negro Africa, and those for which the

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1. Murdock, 1959, pp.37-39.

claim is made are recent and probably the result of external influences including especially the development of the world market for slaves after the Sixteenth Century. Even with such rulers, the arrangement at Ōyō is typically African. There the Başōrun, or Prime Minister, as leader of the Council of State, could, at any time, send a gift of parrot's eggs to a tyrannical Alāfin signifying an order, nearly always obeyed, that a Ruler should destroy himself.<sup>1</sup> In nearly all African kingdoms the king rules with the advice and consent of a council of elders or of ministers or of lineage heads; and they can remove him at their pleasure. The decrees which they put in his mouth have, it is true, the form of depot's arbitrary whim. I would suggest, however, that the logical model for this procedure is less likely the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt or the Fulani sultans than the various masks, ancestral, society, and historical, which often pronounce oracles, thereby speaking the mind of the elders in a public, theatrical way. It is in this sense that the king in Africa so often combines the qualities of apparent despotism with an untouchable sacredness and a ritual and personal isolation that would make nearly impossible the exercise of really despotic powers. If there is some plausibility to this notion of the African king as a living, sacred mask, then the pattern may well be a very old one. Some of the most striking paintings from the Negro periods at Tassili, in the central Sahara, are unmistakable pictures of masks.

If we look at a selection of African states, we may start with Ashanti, which is well reported.<sup>2</sup> The whole society rested firmly on a base of matrilineal lineages, grouped into a limited number of clans which ramified through the whole of Ashanti and outside it too. There were a varying of divisions, each ruled by a *hene*, or "king". The *hene* of the Kumasi Division was also Asantehene, or king of Ashanti. Surrounding each of these *hene* was a council of the senior elders of the lineages that made up his division. These men were in principle commoners. They could not succeed him, but they could remove him; and his appointment required their consent. No *hene* could deal directly with another *hene*, but only through one of these elders, with whom he established a personal relationship and who was his "friend in court". Even the *Asantehene* was subject to this rule, which effectively insulated the reigning royals from each other. The *Asantehene* was extremely sacred and was subject to many restraints. He was not, however, the senior political officer of the kingdom. This position was held by the "Queen-Mother", the senior lady of the royal lineage. It was said that she would be king if she could lead the troops in battle, but this she could not do. It was one of her functions to nominate a new king. The council of elders had to accept her nomination, and in turn the assembly of

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1. Abraham, 1958, p. 17.

2. Rattray, 1923, 1929.

“Youngmen”, the commoners who were not elders, had also to pass on the nomination. The Ashanti kingdom, or confederacy, was very warlike, but wars could only be declared with the consent of the divisions, and taxes were always levied *ad hoc* and with the consent of the bodies that had to pay them. The man chosen as king had first to divest himself of all his wealth and possessions. He entered the kingship as a pauper. In principle he was heir to all the gold in the kingdom. In practice this meant that when anyone died his gold moved up one step in the elaborate hierarchy that constituted the society. The king received only what was left at the end of the process. He had of course many other sources of revenue, but he could pass on nothing to his heirs. Any wealth he accumulated remained with the kingly office. There is much more that could be said about this constitution, but it is already quite clear that the English word “king” is stretched almost beyond recognition when it is applied to the Ashanti situation. In European thinking, whether aristotelian, royalist or Freudian, there is a strong connection between the idea of king and that of the father of a family. The king is the father figure, writ large, just as the father is in many European societies the king figure writ small. But what shall we say of a society where the family is strongly matrilineal and where the king is ranked by the queen-mother?

Dahomey, to the east of Ashanti, was a true despotism, according to Herskovits.<sup>1</sup> The king took an active, direct role in political affairs, and was very careful to see that nobody in the kingdom became strong enough to challenge his power. He ruled through an elaborate bureaucracy that included, according to one account, a well organised, secret census-taking system. The lineage elders in Dahomey seem to have been important at the village level, where they could make life very uncomfortable for a royal official; but apart from this, they played little role in the higher levels of the official structure. The king had a council of ministers with specialized jobs, but between him and his ministers there was a group of women, known as “the wives of the leopard”. They served as a board of audit and control. Particular women were assigned to watch particular ministers. They had to be present whenever the minister reported, and it was their duty to remember what he had said before. Both Dahomey and Ashanti became wealthy on the slave-trade and engaged in systematic wars to capture slaves. They both seem to be developments of pre-existing patterns, and both made of these patterns something considerably more autocratic than what had gone on before—Dahomey much more so than Ashanti. There is no evidence in either kingdom of conquest by an external power; and so far as one can tell, the ruling groups are ethnically continuous with their subjects.

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1. Herskovits, 1938.

Nupe is an ancient kingdom which was conquered by the Fulani in the early 19th Century. It presents a double problem for analysis, for one must isolate those features which are original from those which result from the Fulani occupation. In the Bida district, close to and in the capital, the *Etsu Nupe*, the king, used a mixture of administrative elements that survived from the old kingdom, plus a hierarchy of appointed officials, many of whom were slaves. This hierarchy connected at its lower end with the Nupe lineages. Many of the aristocracy lived in Bida, but they were usually given the task of collecting the tax in outlying districts, where their operations, according to Nadel, were more in the nature of a series of raids than a continuous, organised administration.<sup>1</sup> The princes, etc., are constantly shifted about so they cannot build up power in one district. Nupe is an example of a kingdom with a known history of conquest by an alien, cattle-herding group accustomed to rule. The impression that one gets from Nadel is that the resulting state was far more loosely organised and operated than are, for example, either Dahomey or Ashanti. It seems to me likely that even where there is a history of conquest, the administrative structures and procedures are most likely to grow between conquests and to some extent in spite of them. The conquering king may very well find the indigenous bureaucracy a useful tool for keeping his unruly relatives in line, separated from each other and from the means to power.

Going to Northern Rhodesia, we find in the kingdom of the Barotse a situation where a riverain kingdom practices an elaborate system of agriculture, fishing and cattle-keeping, with a cycle of transhumance as the Zambesi river floods and drops. This kingdom has conquered about a dozen other tribes on the plateau above the river, and exacts tribute from them. The conquering Lozi and the subject tribes are all Bantu-speaking. They all do agriculture and keep cattle, whose numbers are about equal to the human population. One is immediately struck by the restricted number of ways in which wealth can be accumulated, as compared with the situation in West Africa. Cattle, wives, and foodstuffs practically exhaust the list. There is no money, and there are no markets and little development of slavery.<sup>2</sup> The Lozi have a unique system of "sectors", which are more or less arbitrary social groupings to which individuals are assigned and which are presided over by officials who are members of the council of state. These "sectors", to use Gluckman's term, are not lineages, nor do they occupy unified areas. They are important in the organization of the army and of the royal tribute system, which may be unique in Africa. The essence of the tribute system is that the bulk of the foodstuffs of the country, as well as many things made by handicrafts, must be turned in as tribute to

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1. Nadel, 1942.

2. Gluckman, 1941.

the royal storehouses. Then these things are parcelled out in all directions. It operates, in other words, as the main distributing system, in lieu of markets. Professor Gluckman and I have a difference of opinion as to whether this system works exploitatively for or against particular groups in the kingdom. He says that it does not. As I read his material, it seems to me that systematic economic exploitation of certain groups is almost certainly present, although if so it is of low degree as compared to the exploitative systems of West Africa. I say this with due respect for the fact that it is Professor Gluckman who has visited, studied and reported on the Lozi. Like all the groups so far mentioned, the Lozi have an elaborate court system and a highly refined legal sense.

Lovedu is a small kingdom in the Transvaal.<sup>1</sup> It consists of about 35,000 people, made up of over a hundred different ethnic groups, mostly remnants from the breakup of the old Monomatapa empire. They are held together in a tightly organized political whole by their allegiance to their queen, who is a rain-maker famous throughout southeast Africa. The first of these queens, Mugaji I, came to the throne about the year 1800. The third queen in line, Mugaji III, died in February, 1959. The average reign of these fabulous women has been over fifty years long. There is an elaborate court etiquette, but otherwise there is little to distinguish the queen's house or dress from that of any other substantial person. The queen "marries" many wives, from the different groups in the kingdom. These are allowed to have male lovers, so as to produce children. As these children are married into the various groups, the queen becomes the center of an elaborate kindred, for she is at once "son-in-law" and "parent"-in-law to a large number of strategically placed people. There is no organized force, but there is a set of courts to hear cases. The decisions of these courts can only be enforced by public sentiment, which is very strong, however. The queen's emotions affect the rainfall, and if she is unhappy, there is danger of drouth. She owns all the blood, and objects to having it spilt in quarrels or in homicide. There is a certain amount of tribute required from the districts, mostly paid in beer, and the queen is happy when it is promptly paid. The queen's agents must be so tactful in their actions that instead of a bureaucracy, I prefer to call them an "internal diplomatic corps".

The last kingdom which I should like to mention is that of the Shilluk, along the upper Nile River.<sup>2</sup> The Shilluk kingdom consists of a paper-thin string of settlements along one side of the Nile. The Shilluk keep cattle, and are physically a typical, tall nilotic group. They went naked until recently. The settlements are organized into villages and then into lineages, each of which occupies a certain

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1. Krige, 1943.

2. Hofmayr

length of the river. The king founds a royal compound on his installation, and a permanent tomb of some size is made for him there when he dies. There are only four permanent officials, the ministers in charge of the north and south directions and the northern and southern borders. Other officials are appointed *ad hoc*. The royal lineage is systematically exogamous, like all other lineages, and many groups have been taken into the Shilluk kingdom by adoption, at one time or another. The king has a bodyguard of young men who serve as warriors to help defend Shilluk cattle from Dinka raiders. As they get older, these men are settled into the villages and the king gets wives for them. They then serve as informal agents of the king. Apart from having more wives and more huts than anyone else, there is little to distinguish the king's standard of living from that of other compound heads. Fr. Hofmayr says that he must always be ready to defend himself physically, that he prowls the royal compound at night, with a handful of spears, and keeps it a secret in which hut he intends to stay. He hears and tries cases as chief judge, and has the enviable privilege of beating a tiresome litigant over the head with a club. The Shilluk live in a difficult environment, and are a rather primitive group, by any standard. Their state is politically so primitive that it only just deserves the name of state and kingdom. They have lived for thousands of years in the vicinity of Egypt and Ethiopia, but show few of the characteristics and advantages which have been alleged for "Hamitic influence".

It seems to me that the six kingdoms considered here are so different in the details of their structures that no single explanation, such as conquest, can possibly account for them. I would argue that in the main they are to be explained in terms of the sort of economic and political processes that have produced states in many other parts of the world. Except for the Shilluk, they have, it seems to me a common style that one may perhaps call "Negro African". It is not easy to specify the elements of this "style", but one may mention; (1) a passion for legality and order; (2) a passion for indirection in social relationships; (3) the lineage basis of most political structures; (4) the ability to spin great political structures out of kinship and lineage systems; (5) a vivid and sophisticated imagination for constitutional arrangements. There are other characteristics that could be named too. But the important thing is that as one reads about the royal tax system of Dahomey and the elaborate, subtle balance of kinship, courts and weather-making in Lovedu, one feels that different as these kingdoms are from each other, they have sprung from a common way of thinking.

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## "SCIENTIFIC" RACISM AND THE BRITISH THEORY OF EMPIRE

by

P. D. CURTIN

XENOPHOBIA is a natural human sentiment, however irrational or unpleasant, and from the beginning of European activity overseas it has played its role in setting the tone of relations between Europeans and others they have met in various corners of the globe. As European activity took the form of colonization, xenophobia was important in the formation of a hundred different societies. In each case the sentiment of racial difference took a slightly different form, and to be properly understood the role of racial thought must be studied separately in each, and comparatively over a wide span of different examples.<sup>1</sup>

European racial thought and its applications, however, can also be seen at another level in the European theories of empire, which considered race difference from the height of systematic knowledge and from that position laid out the proper aims of "native policy". Although most of the recent historians of Anthropology have not been anxious to claim descent from some of the more remote ancestors of the modern science of man, "Anthropology" has influenced colonial policy from a very early date. In 1516, the Spanish Council of the Indies circulated an ethnographic questionnaire of a fairly crude sort to their officials in Hispaniola in the effort to obtain systematic information about the culture and habits of the Indians,<sup>2</sup> and from that time onward racial thought has had a bearing on the theory of empire of the European imperial powers.

Up to the middle of the eighteenth century this racial thought was systematic and verbose, but hardly scientific. It wavered back and forth between two basic positions. On the one hand there was the Christian tradition that God had created mankind in His image. It could be argued, therefore, that all men were spiritually equal in the sight of God. Against this tradition there was the constant factor of plain xenophobia, cultural misunderstanding, and conflict of interest all around the periphery of European activity. Even before

1. See, for example, Carl N. Degler, "Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, II, 49-66 (October, 1959).
2. *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas* (42 vols; Madrid, 1864-1889), XXXIV, 201-229.

the authority of the Scriptures was shaken, there were many who were willing to use a variety of evidence to argue that non-Europeans were, in fact, an inferior stock. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in sixteenth-century Spain and some of the English Puritans of the early seventeenth saw this inferiority in terms that were still, within wide limits, theologically orthodox.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1655, however, Isaac Peyrère published his *Prae-Adamitae*, which claimed to show that most non-Europeans were not descendants of Adam at all, but the product of a separate creation.<sup>2</sup>

A new element was added in the second half of the eighteenth century. With the growth of respect for scientific knowledge, some Europeans began to set racial thought in more "scientific" terms. They claimed to prove the innate superiority of one race and the inferiority of all others by what passed for rational and objective demonstration. The doctrine first made its appearance in the wake of the major biological studies of Linnaeus and Buffon. In a framework of biological thought chiefly concerned at that period with classification and dominated by the idea of the "Great Chain of Being", species and sub-species were arranged in a systematic hierarchy according to descent from "higher" to "lower" levels of existence. If all animals fitted into a fixed order on the scale of creation, it was natural to assume that the types of mankind also fell into some sort of hierarchical arrangement—that some races of men were "higher" and others "lower".

Discussions of the origin, classification, and abilities of the various types of *homo sapiens* became increasingly important from the 1770s onward, though the nature of the "scientific" discussion changed with the progress of scientific thought in general. As time passed, "The Great Chain of Being" dropped gradually out of the picture. In the early nineteenth century there was a prolonged argument between the monogenists, who believed in a single creation for all races, and the polygenists, who believed that God had created each different race of men by a separate act. When phrenology came into popularity, the inferiority of the "lower races" was proven by phrenological arguments. With the decline of phrenology, the racists turned instead to evolutionary arguments tuned to the rising note of evolutionary thought.

At first, acceptance of "scientific" racism was slow. The orthodox Christians in particular were reluctant to admit the alleged multiplicity of creations, and the rising tide of "scientific" racism was held back in Britain during the early nineteenth century by the opposition of James Cowles Pritchard, the most respected anthropologist of the

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1. J. H. Parry, *The Spanish Theory of Empire in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp.27-43; H. H. Pearce, *The Savages of America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953) pp. 20-22.
  2. T. Bendyshe, "The History of Anthropology", *Memoirs Read Before the Anthropological Society of London*, I (1863-64), 335.

1830s and 40s.<sup>1</sup> In the second half of the century, however, religious orthodoxy weakened in scientific circles. The racist position became increasingly popular in the 1850s. In the 1860s it found a special home in the Anthropological Society of London, with the special patronage of James Hunt. From the 1890s to the first World War it reached the peak of its popularity, with almost universal acceptance in British scientific circles, but after the war it began to wane as the attack of genuinely scientific Anthropology gradually made its way within the universities. By the end of the second World War, "scientific" racism was intellectually dead and politically damned by the Nazi defeat and the concerted efforts of UNESCO.<sup>2</sup>

These tendencies in the rise and fall of "Scientific" racism were broadly on the same time-schedule throughout the Western world. Scientists in all Western countries contributed to the pseudo-scientific basis of the doctrine, even though their work reached the British public through popularizers like Houston Steward Chamberlain or Benjamin Kidd. And the timing was extremely important for the history of the British Empire. "Scientific" racism received its first development in the 1770s, just when the British government first turned its attention to the problem of ruling a territory with "natives" in Bengal. The development of the doctrine and the development of the Empire ran side by side from then onward until the final burst of British imperialism coincided with the final burst of "scientific" racism. Thus the golden age of racism was also the golden age of the Imperial idea.

The key "scientific fact" was the belief that physical appearance was merely an outward mark of an inborn and permanent inferiority for all non-European peoples. The agreement among scientists hardly carried further. The number of races, the order of ranking, and the degree of difference separating each "inferior" race from the next "higher" one were all matters of dispute. It is especially hard to find a common view on the question of which innate abilities belonged to which race. Some scientists placed Africans in the same species with chimpanzees, though this was common only at a very early stage in the development of the race idea. Others took a more liberal position that Africans were merely different from Europeans in their abilities—not necessarily inferior.

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1. See J. C. Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (London, 1813), and *The Natural History of Man* (London, 1843). Both of these passed through a series of constantly enlarging editions.
  2. There is a growing literature on the history of anthropology and the rise and fall of pseudo-scientific racism. For brief treatment see E. W. Count, "The Evolution of the Race Idea in Modern Western Culture during the Period of the Pre-Darwinian Nineteenth Century", *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, VIII (1946), 139-165; E. B. Reuter, "Fifty Years of Racial Theory", *American Journal of Sociology*, L (1945), 452-461; or, for the general spread of racial thought, J. Bargun, *Race: A Study in Modern Superstition* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1937).

There was more agreement about the order of rank. While scientists might work with minute measurements of skulls and construct elaborate anthropometric indices, they never in fact departed far from the old-fashioned layman's distinction of skin color—and whatever they might publish in scientific journals, it was skin color that served popular mind as the real touchstone of race difference. Consequently, light colored Europeans were put at the top of the scale—their inevitable position since Europeans made the scale—and darker races were ranked at the bottom, usually in order of darkness.

The precision and nuance of the individual scientific formulations were lost in any case as the ideas of the “scientific” racists were popularized and spread to a broader public. At the lowest level, the distinction was drawn between only three major racial groups—white men who could speak English, white men who could not (that is to say, “foreigners”), and an all-encompassing group made up of readily recognizable non-Europeans, whether Asian, African, American Indian, or Polynesians, and known simply as “the lower races”.

The educated public, however, paid some attention to the precision of racial distinction made by the scientists, especially the policy-makers, whose business it was to deal with the “lower races”, and theorists who wrote about Imperial questions. These non-scientific intellectuals, however, took the ideas of the scientists and mixed them freely with their existing set of preconceptions about the world and society. Their inferences from “scientific” racism were therefore a blend of racism and other attitudes, and their suggestions for applying the teachings of “science” to the government of the Empire were extremely diverse.

It is possible, however, to pick out of this diversity a number of important schools of thought, each of which had its followers over a period extending from several decades to a century or more. The most familiar of these may be called the “teleological view” of race difference. In summary, the position was this: God created men unequal. Their inequality had a purpose. We whites were made intelligent so that we could wisely direct the labor of others. Other races, and usually this meant the Africans, were given strong backs, weak minds, and a placid disposition so that they can labor effectively under our direction. This view was prevalent in America as the principal defense of slavery on racial grounds. Curiously enough, it was not commonly used in the British controversy over emancipation in the 1830s. Instead, it had a phase of popularity in the hands of pro-slave-trade propagandists between about 1788 and 1807, after which it died out of English polemical writing until the later 1840s.

The revival of the teleological interpretation coincides approximately with the publication of a number of exceptionally virulent pseudo-scientific works on race in the earlier 1850s, especially Robert Knox's *Races of Man* in England and the works of Campbell, Nott and

Glidden in the United States,<sup>1</sup> but the most notorious statement of the case in literary form is Thomas Carlyle's *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question*, first published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1849. There Carlyle laid it down in colorful, popular, and unmistakable terms that Europeans are born wiser than Africans, and the "Law of the World" had decreed that the "more foolish" must obey their superiors or both would pay the price in "futility and disappointment". In this view, slavery was not only necessary for the sake of the Europeans, it was also a positive benefit to Negroes, since they would find security and happiness only in the calling the gods had ordained for them.<sup>2</sup>

Many variants of this view appeared on down the nineteenth century. The most extreme writers suggested that emancipation was a failure and slavery should be reinstituted in the West Indies, though this view was relatively rare. More commonly, it was held that Negroes must be forced to work, but their labor could be assured by measures short of slavery, such as a labor draft, or direct taxation designed to force work for wages in order to meet the demands of the tax collector.<sup>3</sup>

There were many variants of the teleological view. Most were based on an assumed inferiority of non-Europeans, but they could also rest on the alleged "facts" of racial adaptation to climate. Medical men believed throughout the nineteenth century that Negroes could work in the tropics, and Europeans could not. The argument then ran something like this: Nature or God has placed black men in the tropics because they can withstand the "climate"; the resources of the tropics were placed there for the enjoyment of all mankind; therefore these resources must be exploited by the labor—voluntary if possible, but forced if necessary—of the only kind of men capable of doing it.

All variants of the teleological view were customarily set in the changeless terms of non-evolutionary thought, but a second school of evolutionary racists adopted a more dynamic formulation. With many variations, their general position was to hold that the present racial order is not permanent. The races of men are in competition

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1. R. Knox, *Races of Man: A Fragment* (London, 1850); John Campbell, *Negromania* (Philadelphia, 1851); J. C. Nott and G. R. Glidden, *Types of Mankind* (London, 1854).
  2. (Thomas Carlyle) "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question", *Fraser's Magazine*, XL (1849), 670-79.
  3. The use of direct taxation to encourage "natives" to work for Europeans was not necessarily racist in origin. Its most forceful advocate in the Colonial Office was the anti-racist Third Earl Grey, during his tenure as Secretary of State in 1846-52. His intention was to combat what he considered to be the climatic causes of the "listless mode of life" of the tropics. (Grey to Torrington, 24 October 1848, quoted in Grey, *The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration* (2 vols.: London, 1853), I, 81-83). The Scheme was later taken up and advocated on racial grounds in Ceylon, the West Indies, and especially in tropical Africa.

and the weaker will ultimately die out to make room for the stronger. Nor was this view simply an offshoot of Darwinian thought. Just as the teleological view lasted long after Darwin's work was well known, the evolutionary view made its appearance at a very early date.

The earliest variant in the British Empire appeared in the thirteen American colonies before their independence. Some Americans argued in the eighteenth century that the westward advance was part of the law of progress, and the extinction of the American Indians was Nature's way of making room for a superior race.<sup>1</sup> This idea was not common in England until the 1830s, when it seems to have been imported from America; but it soon played a dominant role in the discussions of a proper "native policy" for Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa. It was impossible to deny the fact of population decline among the Maoris, the Canadian Indians or the Australian aborigines. The question was—what to do about it?<sup>2</sup>

Two opposite solutions were presented in the 30s, with a number of in-between positions. One group of humanitarians organized the Aborigines Protection Society and argued that Britain should exercise Christian forbearance, making every effort to delay and perhaps prevent the extinction of the aborigines. Others, less humanitarian, argued with varying degrees of heartlessness, that the will of the gods was known and the work of Progress was inevitable—why then try to hold back the inevitable triumph of the European race?<sup>3</sup>

If human progress was supposed to take the form of race war in Australia and Canada, it was only a short step to see race struggle as the key to history in Europe as well. One of the earlier racial interpretations of European history was brought forward in 1841 by Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby in his inaugural Lecture as Regius Professor of History at Oxford. Arnold argued that the history of human progress was the story of successive achievements by a line of creative races, each of which fulfilled its natural capabilities and then passed on the produce of its work to a still stronger race—Greece to Rome to the superior Germanic peoples of Northern Europe. But with the Germans the process reached its termination. According to Arnold there was no stronger race, and therefore the present stage of history was the last stage. Other races would either receive their culture in its entirety from the West, or being unable to absorb it, would dwindle away in the presence of a more powerful life and at last become extinct.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Pearce, *Savages of America*, pp. 42-49.

2. See especially, Parliamentary Papers, 1836, vii (538) and 1837, vii (425), "Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements),"

3. See, for example, W. MacCann, *Two Thousand Miles Ride through the Argentine Provinces* (2 vols.; London, 1853), I, 258-270.

4. T. Arnold, *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* (New York, 1842), pp. 44-50.

Arnold's view of matters was not especially original even in the 1840s, and it prefigured a whole succession of similar interpretations that were to appear during the later nineteenth century. Its reception, however, marked the beginning of still another deviant from the belief in racial superiority. The reviewer in the *Westminster* drew attention to an inconvenient "fact". If the test of history were the capacity to survive, the Africans had shown themselves quite capable of survival in the tropics where Europeans could not live. Was it not possible, then, that the Europeans might some time pass on their achievements to a superior race of Negroes?<sup>1</sup>

As stated initially, this idea was not necessarily disturbing, but some terrifying implications could be drawn from it. Was it not possible that civilization itself could be lost to a race that was thought to be physically strong but mentally feeble? When this possibility appeared, an element of fear entered the picture. It was especially developed by Dr. Robert Knox in *The Races of Man*. According to Knox the struggle for the tropical world was not to be taken lightly. Negroes had already expelled the French from Haiti and might soon expel other Europeans from the whole of the West Indies and Brazil, and they would certainly prevent any effective European occupation of Africa itself.<sup>2</sup> Knox's work was followed shortly by the rising of the Xosa in South Africa, the Indian Mutiny, the Maori wars, and the Morant Bay rising in Jamaica. With these events the old complacency about the natural extinction or natural servitude of the dark races weakened. Race struggle could still figure in the evolutionary contest, but it was no longer as one-sided as appeared in the 1830s. The racial superiority of Europeans in the tropics was still taken for granted, but other peoples were more often regarded with suspicion and less often with commiseration at their imminent death.

A third school of racial thought combined elements of the teleological view and the evolutionists' view and fused both with elements of the Christian tradition. Christians could, of course, take a straight teleological position and support the enslavement of the "sons of Ham". They would also be found in the evolutionary camp, but there was a dominantly Christian position found among the most vocal of the laity and clergy in both Church and chapel.

The particular mark of this school was a form of ambivalence in their thought about non-Europeans. Serious Christians were at once more humanitarian than their less serious fellow countrymen, and more culture-bound. Pride in the possession of the One True Religion was confused with pride of race and pride of European civilization. Non-Europeans were considered to be either barbarians or savages, and thus culturally inferior. They were also pagans, and thus in a degree spiritually inferior. But for all that, they were

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1. W. R. G., "Dr. Arnold," *Westminster Review*, XXX (1843), 1-7.  
2. Knox, *Races of Man*, pp. 268, 243-46, 456.

"fellow creatures" and thus a proper object for Christian charity. In 1772, in the midst of the Somerset case, Granville Sharp wrote: "I am far from having any particular esteem for the Negroes; but as I think myself obliged to consider them as *men* I am certainly obliged also to use my best endeavours to prevent their being treated as beasts by our unchristian fellow countrymen".<sup>1</sup> Both the element of humanitarianism and the feelings of cultural superiority came out most decisively in the works of John Wesley, and these works were widely read in the nineteenth century. At times, Wesley used savage culture as a terrible example of the depths to which mankind might be led by the untrammelled operation of original sin, while at other times, he explicitly defended Africans against the pseudo-scientific supporters of the slave trade.<sup>2</sup>

These early positions were not specifically concerned with questions of race, but racial thought entered the picture in the 1790s when the pro-slavery polemicists began to use pseudo-scientific racism to defend the slave trade. Christian humanitarians were forced to develop counter arguments. They returned to the Bible and found that God had "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth" (Acts, xvii, 26). Increasingly they went to the scientists themselves for anti-racist arguments, and this co-operation reached its culmination during the 1840s in the friendship and collaboration of James Cowles Prichard and Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, a Quaker who was also an amateur anthropologist and founder of the Aborigines Protection Society. By the 1830s and 1840s, the dominant belief in the humanitarian camp was that all races of men were equal—both in the sight of God and in their potentialities for development and achievement, though not in their existing state of culture.

The mid-century marked the furthest swing of Christian racial thought in the direction of egalitarianism. The position was not sustained. The pseudo-scientific view of race was now all-pervasive, and the prestige of science was immense; but the swing towards racism was only partly accountable to the scientists. An important contributing stream came in from the missionary movement. When missionaries went out to the pagans in the various corners of the Empire, they wrote back in detail to the home society. These letters were selected and published in journals with very wide circulation as a means of stimulating missionary subscriptions. They therefore stressed the wickedness of pagan society, the abominable customs of the savages, and the immensity of the evil to be eradicated by Christian influence. This was not dishonest propaganda: the missionaries were genuinely shocked, and they were genuinely convinced of the

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1. G. Sharp to J. Bryant, 19 October 1772, quoted in G. Sharp, *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God*... (London, 1776), pp. 44-46.
  2. N.T. Hodgen, "The Negro in the Anthropology of John Wesley", *Journal of Negro History*, XIX (1934), 308-323.

righteousness of Western culture and the wickedness of other ways of life. In their zeal, however, they often failed to discriminate between race and culture, and their readers made still less distinction between the "evils" described and the dark skins of those who practiced them.

If the "before" image was damaging to the racial reputation of non-Europeans, the "after" image was equally so. The new converts were pictured as simple people, who accepted with humility and childlike faith the teaching of their alien pastors.<sup>1</sup> After a century of missionary effort the image was fixed, and Kipling merely cited a recognized "truth" when he wrote of:

Your new-caught sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.

The missionaries' image of the non-Europeans blended with the existing cultural arrogance and with the pseudo-scientific arguments for racial superiority. The result was the complex of attitudes now known under Kipling's phrase, "White Man's Burden". The sentiment behind "White Man's Burden" was actually a jumble of several variants, but the main line is clear enough: other races are different from and inferior to Europeans. We Europeans therefore owe them a special obligation of the same kind that we owe to women, children, and dumb animals, and to all who are weaker than ourselves.

By the later nineteenth century, this attitude was not confined to missionaries. It was taken up by some who were rather the opponents of the missionaries than otherwise. Mary Kingsley was one of these. Herself a field ethnologist and influenced by the racial ideas of the physical anthropologists, she held that in West Africa, "... the Protestant English missionaries have had most to do with rendering the African useless" because they missed the point of racial difference and were trying to bring about racial equality through education. This was the wrong approach because "a black man is no more an undeveloped white man than a rabbit is an undeveloped hare; and the mental difference between the two races is very similar to that between men and women among ourselves".<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the Africans should be encouraged to develop in their own way, rather than to try to climb the Europeans' "own particular summit in the mountain range of civilization".<sup>3</sup> But at the same time, European control is necessary for the sake of the Africans as well as for that of the Europeans. It implies obligations as well as privileges; and both the obligations and the privileges are permanent, because the "fact" of racial difference is permanent.

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1. This point is discussed at length in J. F. A. Ajayi, "Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria 1841-1891" (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1958), especially pp.598-99.
  2. M. H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1897), p. 659.
  3. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, p.680.

In either the Christian or the secular version, the idea of trusteeship implied a very different kind of policy from that implied by either of the other two major lines of thought about race and Empire. It was especially important to the formation of British policy in tropical Africa for a decade on either side of 1900. It justified a "forward policy" where African political institutions seemed unable to maintain peace and order. It also justified a widespread de-Africanization program in the West African government service. Africans, who had held many important government posts, were removed from office on grounds that they provided only an indifferent quality of administration for their fellow countrymen,<sup>1</sup> and their places were taken by more highly trained and selected Europeans. The mass of the Africans were to be the carefully guarded wards of the Empire—not wards for the time being, as the early nineteenth-century humanitarians had hoped, but permanent wards who were racially incapable of receiving the full measure of Western civilization. The essential point was there. They were to be wards not beasts of burden nor yet peoples whose inevitable extinction was hailed as a triumph for the law of progress.

Neither the idea of a permanent trusteeship nor either of the other main lines of policy suggested by racist thought was ever so dominant as to exclude the others—nor, indeed, was racist thought itself ever completely triumphant over a continuous but muted undertone of suggestion that "scientific" racism was pseudo-scientific nonsense.

Still, the vast majority of Englishmen believed in some version of the racial myth, though this belief led to conclusions and suggested policies that were often directly opposed to one another. Some of these differences are explained by differences in the race theories themselves, but most were not derived from racial thought at all. Few of the racists were merely racists. They had other social prejudices, sentiments, and ideas about the nature of man and society.

With some, the application came first and the scientific justification followed. This was especially true of the white West Indians, who lived in a society where lines of race and caste coincided. One of the earliest versions of pseudo-scientific racism was, indeed, the work of Edward Long of Jamaica, who seized on the appearance of Buffon's work in order to place his arguments for the inferiority of Negroes on a more "scientific" basis.<sup>2</sup> Long's prejudice was undoubtedly genuine, but others who were not especially xenophobic in their racial attitudes seized on the pseudo-scientific argument for political reasons. During the controversy over the slave trade in the 1790s,

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1. I am especially indebted for this point to J. F. Ade Ajayi and David Kimble for allowing me to read the manuscripts of their forthcoming works dealing with aspects of the history of Nigeria and the Gold Coast respectively; and to C. H. Fyfe for communicating some of the results of his research into the history of Sierra Leone.
  2. E. Long, *History of Jamaica* (3 vols.; London 1774), II, 351-371.

for example, pamphleteers in the interest of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa consistently tried to justify the slave trade on grounds of African racial inferiority. At the same time their non-polemical writings show little trace of race prejudice, and in fact Philip Quaque, an African and the Chaplain at Cape Coast, was receiving the highest salary paid by the Company to any of its servants except the Governor himself. In spite of cultural differences, their dealings with Africans on the Coast were dealings between equals.

Applications of racial thought also interacted with religious convictions. Christians were called upon to spread the gospel among men, without distinction of race. But the aims and methods of missionaries varied according to their racial beliefs, and their work was heavily influenced by the ubiquity of racism.

Evolutionary thought as such, on the other hand, seems to have played a passive role in bending racial thought towards particular policies. Evolutionary racism might lead to diametrically opposed policies, depending on one's particular beliefs about the nature of the race struggle, which race was winning, and by what margin. Thus the humanitarian evolutionists of the 1830s could ask their countrymen to act with gentleness toward the "inferior races" rapidly passing to extinction, while the tougher-minded evolutionists of the later century urged the opposite policy of making no concession lest the worm turn and the Europeans lose a round in the battle for survival.

This element of racial fear in the later nineteenth century is itself an external factor of some importance. It seems out of place at the height of European dominance in the world. It was hardly justified by empirical facts, and it was not necessary to evolutionary theory. It seems, instead, to be a product of the peculiar anxieties of the age—anxieties associated with all the peculiar problems of Western civilization at the turn of the nineteenth century.

With all this diversity in the application of racial thought the fact of diversity may seem to be the only constant. But racists of all shades could agree on one point. Whether the "inferior races" were to be coddled and protected, exterminated, forced to labor for their "betters", or made into permanent wards, they were undoubtedly outsiders—a kind of racial proletariat. They were forever barred both individually and collectively from high office in church and state, from important technical posts in law or medicine, and from any important voice in their own affairs. By any of the pseudo-scientific positions, they were racially unfitted for "advanced" British institutions such as representative democracy. For British racists of all brands, the Empire was *their* empire, and the idea of a multiracial commonwealth was a contradiction in terms.

A. P. Thornton has recently pointed out that the "Imperial idea" in the last generation of the Victorian era was something more than a merely nationalist claim that Britain should rule because Britain was strong. It was the faith of that generation, "...that it was

the role of the British Empire to lead the world in the arts of civilization, to bring light to the dark places, to teach the true political method, to nourish and protect the liberal tradition. It was to act as trustee for the weak, and to bring arrogance low. It was to represent in itself the highest aims of human society".<sup>1</sup>

So it was, but the "Imperial Idea" was also a racial idea, in which the creative and governing force was to be that of the British element. The masses over which Britain's "creative force" was to extend were largely of the "lower races".

The old Imperial Idea is now dead, and one of the most important causes of its fall was the work of two generations of Anthropologists in the early twentieth century, who were able to show that the racial myth was just that—a myth. Ordinary racial prejudice is still common enough, but it can now be dealt with through education. Deprived of its support from pseudo-science, the old Imperial Idea was able to transform itself into the new concept of a multi-racial Commonwealth, and Europeans were more easily able to accept the emergence of the new nations of Africa and Asia.

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1. A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1959), pp.ix-x.

## NOTES ON CONTACT BETWEEN THE IGALA AND THE IBO

*by*  
J. S. BOSTON

THIS paper summarises evidence from traditional and written historical sources about the relationship of some of the Ibo-speaking peoples with their neighbours, the Igala, who live north of Ibo territory between the left bank of the Niger and the country of the Idoma peoples.<sup>1</sup> On the Ibo side of the common boundary, among the several groups of villages that have frequent contacts across the border, tradition connects two groups in particular with the Igala. Evidence of a third important link with the Igala is provided by the records of exploration on the lower Niger, which describe a flourishing trade, in the 19th Century, between the riverain settlements of both peoples. Unfortunately, the oral history of the Ibo groups concerned in this trade has not been recorded and so cannot be compared with Igala traditions. Where comparison of traditions is possible, as it is in respect of the inland connections, the Ibo and Igala appear to take much the same view of events in their mutual history, although their memories differ over some details. They agree in regarding the Igala as the dominant partner of the two, and are both more interested in Igala expansion into Ibo country than in movements in the opposite direction. Although the traditions imply that movement northwards was confined to individual ventures by blacksmiths and a few native doctors, in such features as inter-marriage, common religious ideas and cults, there are signs of much reciprocal Ibo influence on Igala culture. This paper cannot do justice to the number and complexity of the ties between the two peoples, but it must be emphasised that in most contexts they regard their relationship as one of equal interaction.

In the period of a hundred years or so for which there are records, indigenous trade on the Niger between the delta and the confluence

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1. The Igala traditions recorded in this paper were collected by the author in two periods of fieldwork, sponsored respectively by the Federal Department of Antiquities and the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research. Most of the information on Ibo tradition is taken from the valuable studies made of Awka Division by Professor M. D. W. Jeffries, and of Nsukka Division by Dr. C. K. Meek. I am grateful to Dr. Meek for permission to quote from his unpublished report on the Nsukka Division and to summarise the evidence given there of Igala influence in this area.

appears to have been controlled by the Ibo and the Igala within the limits of their respective territories. The earliest explorers, in the first half of the 19th Century, relate that trade was carried on through periodic fairs or markets, which were held at regular intervals at fixed points along the river, usually on uninhabited islands, or on relatively deserted stretches of the river bank.<sup>1</sup> The most important of these markets were those situated near the boundaries of the different groups, and the common market between the Ibo and the Igala was a principal one of this type. It was held on the sandbanks between Onitsha and Asaba, except at the height of the wet season, when these were covered by the river and the business was conducted from canoes, moored close together.<sup>2</sup> The Igala name for this market, Elanyi Ochili, means, sandbank (covered with) temporary shelters. In the notes of the 1841 Expedition it is implied that this market formed a trading boundary between the Ibo and the Igala. But Bishop Crowther discovered on a visit to Onitsha, around 1858, that "Ibo canoes are not allowed to go beyond Idda market, nor are Igala canoes allowed to go below Aboh".<sup>3</sup> The Ibo town of Aboh at first played a major part in the trade with the Igala, acting as middleman in exchanging imported goods from Brass and other Ijaw towns for the slaves, foodstuffs and other "country produce" that were brought down the river. By the middle of the 19th Century, the commercial importance of Onitsha was increasing at the expense of Aboh's own position, and Onitsha eventually took over the trading connection with the Igala, along with the other functions of the island fair which its own market supplanted. In the same period, in the Igala section of the river, the trade with the Ibo became increasingly centred on Idah, which had formerly loosely controlled the temporary markets on both sides of the Niger from Asaba to some distance above the confluence.

Few traditions have been recorded among the Ibo about the beginnings of their trade with the Igala, but it is said at Onitsha that the settlers who migrated across the river to found this town were assisted, when crossing the river, by Igala watermen. There is a tradition of Igala origin among the people of Osamare, below Onitsha, and according to Bishop Crowther this town was "peopled by the Igala originally as a trading station or market".<sup>4</sup> The people of Aboh claim to be of Benin origin and there is no known tradition which connects

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1. cf. Lander, R. & J. *Journal of an expedition to explore the course and termination of the Niger, 1832*; Allen, W., & Thomson, T. R. H., *A Narrative of the Expedition—to the River Niger in 1841*, 2 vols, 1848.
  2. Allen & Thomson, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 271; vol. 2, p. 4.
  3. Crowther, S. & Taylor, J. C., *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger, 1885*, p. 385. According to Macgregor Laird Igala canoes went as far south as Aboh, whilst Ibo canoes went upriver to Bocqua market, just below the confluence. Laird & Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition... in 1832, 1833 & 1834*, pp. 132 & 166, 1837.
  4. Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record, 1876, p. 536.

them with the Igala.<sup>1</sup> Yet Igala traditions explicitly state that Aboh was founded in a migration of families from Idah, the Igala capital. It is also claimed that the chiefs of Aboh were formerly subject to the Ata 'Gala, and that each new chief of Aboh had to spend three months at Idah before investiture, performing rituals, and receiving instructions from the king's eunuchs. A close connection between the two towns appears in references made in a journal of the 1854 Expedition<sup>2</sup> to intervention in a serious dispute at Idah by a chief of Aboh called Aje. But this does not support the view that Aboh was founded from Idah, which is open to doubt in the absence of impartial supporting evidence.

In addition to Aboh, the Igala regard several other Ibo riverain towns as settlements that were originally Igala in descent, speech and customs, before they were absorbed by Ibo culture. These include Okpaiye, Umolu, and Onya on the right bank, and Ndoni and Osamare on the left bank. Asaba is said to have belonged to the Ata, following its conquest by an Igala warrior called Onoja Oboni, whose exploits are discussed below. At Idah, genealogies are given for some of these connections, but there is no comparative material available from the Ibo towns concerned.

Inland from the Niger, the difficult nature of the country separating the two peoples has restricted Igala penetration into Ibo country to the area adjacent to the boundary, extending less than half the distance from the border that is covered by their contacts along the river. Two natural routes traverse the border terrain; one is the river Anambra and its tributaries, and the other follows the hills that run from Nsukka north-west into the Igala kingdom. Ibo tradition shows that the village groups forming the southern terminals of these routes were formerly the main centres of Igala influence in Ibo country east of the Niger.

The history of the Anambra connection with the Igala kingdom is contained in the traditions of a group of related villages that form a clan known as Umueri. This group is settled in two sections, roughly midway between Onitsha and Awka; the northern section is centred on Aguleri, an important trading town on the left bank of the river Anambra, and the southern section has its centre at Nri, some thirty miles away. The towns forming the first section are Aguleri, Nteje, Amanuke, and Igbariam, and the second unit comprises Nri and Oreri.

The northern Umueri villages say that the clan was founded by a man called Eri who came to the Anambra area from Igala country, and settled at Aguleri. Some versions say that he was a hunter, and

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1. Meek, C. K., *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*, 1937, p.11. Forde, D., and Jones, G. I., *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria*, p. 50.
  2. Crowther, S., *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers in 1854, 1855*, p.35.

others that he was an Igala war leader; it is uncertain whether there was an existing settlement when Eri arrived or whether the locality was unoccupied. Eri's first son, Nri, left his father's home to found the town that bears his name, and other sons founded the remaining towns in this group. Aguleri takes its own name from Eri's second son, Agulu, but the ruling families there trace their own descent from one Aguve, who is said to have been given the title of Eze by the Ata 'Gala at Idah.<sup>1</sup>

In the southern section of the clan, the people of Nri similarly regard Eri as the founder of the clan, and Aguleri as their ancestral home, but they give a different version of the connection with Igala. Eri is said by them to be of divine origin, and to have had children by two wives, whom he married at Aguleri: those by the first wives founded the Umueri towns, whilst the second wife's child founded the town of Idah.<sup>2</sup> In this version the Igala, represented by Idah, figure as half-brothers of the Umueri Ibo, and not as their ancestors. The Nri traditions are, however, generally more concerned with the divinity of Eri and his first-born son than with the exact history of the Igala connection; this particular story is part of a cycle of myths, about the origin of the civilised world, in which fact tends to be subordinated to various dogma concerning the creation of the world at Aguleri, and the revelation to Nri, by the Creator, of the secrets of civilisation. When this difference of emphasis is taken into consideration with the other evidence of Igala origins set out below, one can conclude that the northern Umueri version of the connection with Idah is probably more accurate historically than the Nri account, which is coloured by the ritual element present in their legends.

The Igala, for their part, do not claim any relationship with the Umueri towns, nor to have patronised title-taking in the area, but they have important historical connections with the Anambra region, in which Aguleri is situated. They refer these connections to Onoja Oboni, the legendary Igala hero, who lived mainly at Ogurugu and from there raided the Ibo border country as far as the villages on the Nsukka escarpment and as far west as the Niger. The situation of his base, coupled with the strong tradition that Oboni conquered the town of Asaba, makes a connection between his activities and the Igala settlement at Aguleri most probable. Ogurugu is on the river Anambra which connects all three towns, and there is a tradition that Oboni used this route to reach Asaba from Ogurugu. This last town is situated some thirty miles above Aguleri on the river Anambra, and was formerly, because of its strategic position, an important outpost on the southern boundary of the Igala kingdom. The country between Ogurugu and Aguleri, its Ibo counterpart, is typical

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1. Idigo, M. C.M., *The History of Aguleri*, Yaba, 1955. Nzekwu, J., Gloria Ibo, *Nigeria Magazine*, no 64, 1960.
  2. Jeffreys, M. D. W., 'The Umundri Tradition of Origin', *African Studies*, vol 15, no. 3, 1956.

of much of the Ibo-Igala border region, being densely wooded and swampy, intersected by a few paths which become watercourses in the wet season and it is thinly populated even today.

In connection with the Aguleri tradition that their kingship is of Igala origin, it should be mentioned that two other Umueri towns, Nri and Oreri, have a kingship of similar pattern. Professor Jeffreys, who made a detailed study of the system at Nri, concluded that it either derived from the Igala system or else had a common distant origin with it.<sup>1</sup> There are many differences of detail between the two systems, but they are alike in the essential feature that the king's office is sacred and the king's person quasi-divine. These principles underly the restrictions imposed on the king, who both at Idah and at Nri lives secluded, and his relationship with the community, in which the king is responsible for various rituals to ensure general prosperity. They are also expressed in the ritual of the installation, which symbolises the candidate's death and rebirth. A full account of the similarities between the Umueri and the Igala kingship would have to take account of a measure of Benin influence, which has been introduced into the Umueri villages through Onitsha, but it is clear from the evidence assembled by Professor Jeffreys, that the clan's original, and strongest connections are with the Igala through the town of Aguleri.

Onoja Oboni's name and exploits are familiar to the people of Umueri, but the area where he is chiefly remembered in Iboland is the northern part of Nsukka Division. The group of villages of which Nsukka forms the geographical and administrative centre are not directly related to one another, but share a common dialect and many other features of culture, including traditions of being formerly subject to the Igala. Dr. Meek, who collected these traditions, around 1930, writes of the origin of Igala influence in the area as follows: "Though there is little traditional evidence of direct contact with Idah, it is stated that most of the Nsukka Division was at one time overrun by an Igala chief known as Onu (chief) Ojo Ogbonyi. His attacks penetrated as far south as Opi".<sup>2</sup> These raids did not amount to a conquest, but subordinated several villages to the Ata, who controlled some directly, and others indirectly, through the Ashadu, one of the Igala kingmakers. In a few cases, resident Igala agents were appointed to the subject villages, but in the majority, the authority of the Ata and the Ashadu was limited to appointing local men to the title of Eze, or chief. This office and one other title of

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1. Jeffreys, M. D. W., *The Divine Umundri King*, *Africa* vol. VIII, no. 3  
Jeffreys, M. D. W., "The Divine Umundri Kings of Iboland" (Unpublished MS 1934).  
Jeffreys, M. D. W., "Report on the Ibo-Speaking Peoples of Awka Division (Unpublished MS).
  2. Meek, C. K., "An Ethnographical Report on the Peoples of the Nsukka Division", (Unpublished MS 1931).

high rank, called Atama, reflected the great influence of Igala institutions on the formation of the local title system, the former corresponding to the Igala model of kingship with divine attributes, and the latter to the Igala priests in charge of local shrines (whose title is also, Atama). The method of appointment also followed the Igala pattern in which the secular chiefs, the Eze, went to Idah for confirmation by the Ata or Ashadu, whilst the priests took their own titles locally, without referring to Idah.

In Igala tradition concerning relations with the Nsukka Ibo villages, the part played by Onoja Oboni in their conquest is recognised, but overshadowed in interest by the role of the Ashadu, as the Ata's chief representative in the area. The principle of delegation of the Ata's powers within the hierarchy of titled families at Idah, which is raised by the proximity of the Nsukka villages to the Ashadu's hereditary fief, is of such great interest to the Igala that it tends to obscure and override questions of historical origin. Onoja Oboni and his descendants had no specific position in the title system, and their connection with the Nsukka area tends therefore to be regarded as obsolete, and uninteresting, compared with the Ashadu's. The origin of the Ashadu's domain, stretching from the left bank of the Anambra river, past Adoru, towards the Ibo boundary, is equally submerged in the wider constitutional issue of delegation, and the family's traditions do not throw much light on the history of the Nsukka connection. The first Ashadu was an Ibo who came to Idah as a slave, or possibly as a hunter, and, according to Clifford<sup>1</sup> built up a following among the indigenenous population before the present ruling dynasty was established in Idah. On account of their Ibo origin subsequent holders of the title have been regarded as the natural representatives of the people living beyond the Anambra river, who are of mixed Ibo and Igala descent. But although it is not clear whether the main part of their domain originally belonged to the Ashadu's family as of right, or whether it was given to them as a fief by the present ruling dynasty, it appears that their land was extended by the conquests of Onoja Oboni who belonged to the Ata's family, and that authority over this border area was partly delegated to them by the Ata. The division of authority in the area is shown in the following list of towns mentioned in Ibo and Igala traditions on this subject. The names given are those of towns formerly receiving the Eze title from Idah, or (*Italics* in the list) having resident Igala agents in the past. According to the Igala, the last Eze to be appointed by the Ata of Igala was Eze Okija of Ibagwa, who came to Idah for this purpose during the reign of Ata Obaje Ocheje (1926-1945).

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1. Clifford, M., A Nigerian Chiefdom. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. LXVI, 1936.

# IGALA TRADITION

Ata  
Opada  
Ibagwa-Ane  
Adani  
Enugu-Ezeke  
  
Unadu  
Ukutu  
  
Ihakpa  
Nkpologu  
Abi

# IBO TRADITION

Ata  
Ashadu  
Okpuje  
Nsukka  
Obukpa  
  
Enugu-Ezeke  
Opi  
Unadu  
  
Eha Alumona  
Nkpologu  
Akpugu

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## INVESTIGATIONS AT OLD OYO, 1956—57: AN INTERIM REPORT.

by  
FRANK WILLETT

IN 1956 I was invited through the Museums Association of Great Britain to assist the Nigerian Antiquities Service (as it then was) for a period of six months. Mr. Bernard Fagg, who was then Government Archaeologist, suggested that I should undertake excavations at Old Oyo, as the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme and the Antiquities Service were both anxious that such excavations should be undertaken, but the Antiquities Service was too short-staffed to be able to do it. I was granted leave by the Manchester Museum and the University of Manchester for the purpose of undertaking this work. This paper gives a general account of the work that was carried out there, but is in no sense final because much of the material that was brought out from Old Oyo has still not been completely studied.<sup>1</sup> In particular the large quantity of pottery, which turned out to be much the most important material we found, is still incompletely studied, although the study has reached the stage where it is contributing to field work in other parts of Yorubaland. This will be published later as a separate paper. Some parts of the work have already been published and they will be referred to only in passing in this paper.<sup>2</sup>

Old Oyo was believed to be the deserted site of the political capital of Yorubaland now at Oyo about eighty miles further south. Part of the purpose of visiting the site was to find out whether in fact it was the site of the original foundation of Oyo. It was, at any rate, quite evidently a deserted dwelling site, and, as such, was of particular archaeological interest as no sites of this type had ever before been excavated in Nigeria, so that a major purpose of the expedition was to experiment to discover just what the problems of such an excavation were and to see how best to tackle them.

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1. Because of a number of important discoveries made since at Ife, Ilesha and elsewhere in Yorubaland.
  2. Very brief accounts of the work at Old Oyo have appeared in *West Africa*, No. 2153, July 19th, 1958, p. 675; *Man*, 59, 1959, No. 135, and *History and Archaeology in Africa* Second Conference held in July 1957 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, ed. D. H. Jones, (London) 1959, pp. 28-29.

The expedition was very small. There were only ten labourers, which was enough for exploratory purposes but not enough to undertake any substantial work on a site which covered between twenty and thirty square miles. Moreover, as the site was twenty miles from the motor road and ten miles from the nearest village, approximately half the labourers were engaged at any one time in bringing food either for themselves or for me.

According to tradition Oyo was founded from Ife in the early days<sup>1</sup> of Yoruba occupation of Yorubaland. The city was later evacuated and the people moved to Igbohoo for a period before returning to the old site of Oyo which they finally abandoned about 1837 after raids by the Fulani. Shortly before the town was evacuated it was visited by the European explorers Hugh Clapperton and the Lander brothers. They have both left accounts of their visits which guided us in deciding where to dig on this first expedition.

More recent visitors to the site have also left accounts of their visits. J. D. Clarke, the Education Officer who did so much for the preservation of antiquities in Nigeria, visited Old Oyo in December 1937, and did a small amount of digging in the couple of days he spent there, bringing out a number of specimens of pots, some of which contained cowrie shells. They were placed in a museum in a school where he was teaching, but unfortunately many of his specimens were lost or destroyed before the small collection which remained was acquired by the Nigerian Museum in Lagos. The loss is particularly unfortunate as some of the missing specimens are so far unique and include a number of complete or almost complete pots of better quality than many of those which I found.<sup>2</sup> The site was also visited by R. G. Watters who left an account in *Nigeria* magazine<sup>3</sup> and by Phillip Allison whose account is in the files<sup>4</sup> of the Forestry Department, Western Nigeria. On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day

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1. By Oranmiyan, Oni of Ife, who placed his son Ajaka on the throne and returned to Ife. According to Ife tradition Oranmiyan was the son of a beautiful maiden Lakange captured in war by Ogun, who had intercourse with her on the way back to Ife. When they returned to Ife Odua, Ogun's father took her for himself. Odua was a white man and Ogun black, so when the child Oranmiyan was born he was half white and half black. In view of this complication in his begetting, Oranmiyan may be considered either the first generation from Odua or the second. He is however considered to be the fourth Oni of Ife, the succession being: Odua, Obalufon I, Obalufon II (= Alaiyemore), Oranmiyan. See the Oni of Ife's "Notes on the City of Ife", *Nigeria*, No. 12, 1937, p. 3-7.

2. Some of them are illustrated in *Nigeria*

The account of his visit is in *The Nigerian Field*, Vol. 7, 1938, pp. 139/42.

3. No. 44, 1954, pp. 346-9.

4. File No. WP885. Near to Old Oyo he visited an earthwork said to be the site of a temporary camp after the evacuation of Old Oyo. It was called Oyo Aga, Oyo camp, but none of my guides knew of such a place. The present town of Oyo is known as Aga Oyo to distinguish it from Oyo Ile, — home Oyo, the original Oyo. The Hausa name Katunga is still in use for Old Oyo, and was used by Clapperton and the Landers.

1955-56 Mr. Peter Morton-Williams visited the site when he was anthropologist to the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme, and I am especially indebted to him for a detailed account of his visit which he sent to me in a letter. He visited the site again towards the end of my season. Mr Allison, too, gave me a great deal of useful information.

### *The location of the site*

The site lies approximately 40 miles north-north-west of Ilorin at latitude 8 degrees 59 minutes North, and longitude 4 degrees 20 minutes East. It is covered with orchard bush savannah and is now in a game and forest reserve. The trees are roughly forty feet high and between the trees, which constitute a fairly close cover over most of the town, is very tall grass, eight to ten feet high. Among the animals which we found there were large numbers of baboons in the hills, considerable traces of elephant and bush-cow, some bush pig, a few leopards, many rock hyrax and antelope particularly bushbuck and duikers. The water supply proved to be difficult. Eventually we discovered at the northern edge of the town a stream to which the name Erinle has been given; this still managed to flow even towards the end of our season, but was a long way from our camp. We had to rely on water holes as most of the visitors to the site had done before us. It appears that we were particularly unlucky in choosing the dry season of 1956-57 for our visit because the previous rains had been unusually light. Our season began on November 19th 1956 and ended on January 24th 1957, because our last water hole had dried up completely.<sup>1</sup> The population of the town would no doubt have been better acquainted with possible sources of water than we were, but would evidently have suffered great discomfort in times of serious drought.

I first visited the site accompanied by Mr. Bernard Fagg, who stayed for a few days. We approached the site from Paiye along hunters' footpaths and covered a distance of something over twenty miles. Mr. Fagg suggested that we should investigate the possibility of having a road made part way towards the site, and with the cooperation of the Resident of Ilorin Province, Mr. C. M. Michie, and the village head of Paiye, a road was made from Paiye to Babaloke. Although scarcely more than a jeepable track with two crude bridges, it served our purpose extremely well. It reduced the walk from Old Oyo to ten miles and was still motorable at Christmas, 1959.

### *The present condition of the Site*

Old Oyo was found, as I have mentioned above, to be very heavily overgrown, and visibility was extremely difficult. For example, we passed within two feet of the surviving walls of the house of the

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1. A bush pig fell into our only serviceable well at Christmas, thus increasing the acuteness of our water shortage.

Aremo without seeing them although we were specifically looking for them in that area at that time. It was evident that we should have to burn off the bush. We did in fact achieve a very effective burn, much better than we expected at that time of the year. The grass was dry and burnt easily. Even so visibility was not as good as we had hoped; the strong grass, even after burning, still left substantial residues of stalks which prevented a clear view and the burning was not complete over the whole area. In some cases where there were few trees in the more open parts of the city the burn was much more effective and one could see for a few hundred yards, but this was only in areas where there was nothing of archaeological interest. The site, as I mentioned, covers between twenty and thirty square miles; it was therefore quite impossible to undertake any ground survey of the whole site with the small staff I had at my disposal, and particularly with such poor visibility. The Government Survey Department kindly agreed to attempt an air survey. Unfortunately the very thick harmattan prevented the survey aircraft from locating the site on the three or four sorties that were flown that season. The site has been seen several times since, when the plane was not in fact on a sortie for the purpose of surveying this particular site, so we have hopes of having the site properly air surveyed before very long. It is obviously necessary that we should have a good air survey cover before undertaking further excavations on the site so that a general plan of the site may be prepared before visiting it, and the work can be tied in to the features shown on the plan. The existing air survey photographs of the area are unfortunately on too small a scale to be of any great use, but they do show one of the most obvious features, the arc of hills sweeping down the western side of Old Oyo from north to south. These hills were referred to also by the early visitors to the site. My informants gave me the following names for the hills beginning in the North:- 'Diogun, Olomawe, Oke Diara (this was quite a small hill), Oke Abu, Oke Arin (or Oke Alin) and finally, Kojomono, which is a pair of peaks resting on a saddle. Just outside Old Oyo to the south is Agbako. The group of rocks called Mejiro is near the centre of the town, and it is here there are a number of caves.<sup>1</sup> Two of them are large enough for human occupation and it was in these caves that we made the headquarters of our expedition. This seems to be the place where most visitors to Old Oyo have stayed. There are other smaller hills and rocky out-crops, one of which we called Rock Gong Hill because there did not appear to be any true name for it and we found on it a particularly fine example of a rock gong to which I shall refer below. Another is Oke Alate just to the South of Mejiro.

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1. A habitable cave was also found on Kojomono.

The accounts of Old Oyo given by Clapperton<sup>1</sup> and the Landers<sup>2</sup> mention these hills and seem to imply that the occupation was concentrated at the foot of them so that it was here that we chiefly concentrated our work. Towards the end of the season when we went straight across from Mejiro to the eastern boundary, we discovered that in fact there were very substantial remains of compounds on that side with very large water pots still surviving complete. This suggests that in the final days of the city a great deal of the occupation was on the eastern side away from the hills.

Johnson<sup>3</sup> refers to an Oke Ajaka from which Shango called down lightning which struck the palace below. I think this must be the hill that my guides called Olomawele. The only alternative name they knew for this hill was Oke Alafin.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Cave*

One of the purposes of the expedition was to seek out the earliest evidence of the occupation of Old Oyo. It occurred to us, since we and all other casual visitors lived in the cave at Mejiro when we arrived at the site, that probably the earliest occupants of Old Oyo had done the same. We therefore excavated the one cave which had a good soft bottom and seemed to have a fair depth of occupation deposit. In this cave we discovered a layer of Yoruba occupation material up to three feet thick, consisting of pottery, a few beads, two grinding stones, and a certain amount of ironwork and animal bones. In front of this and below it we discovered an older occupation consisting of microlithic quartz implements which must be considered certainly older than the Yoruba occupation and to belong to the New Stone Age. A study of these stone implements was read to the Pan-African Congress on Prehistory at Leopoldville in August 1959, and will be published in the Proceedings of the Fourth Pan-African Congress in due course. The conclusion of that paper is as follows:-

"The closest sites to Old Oyo from which substantial microlithic assemblages have been obtained are at Rop in Northern Nigeria (reported by Bernard Fagg, 1944), and Abetifi in Ghana (reported by C. T. Shaw, 1944). The industries from these sites are essentially similar to that from Old Oyo, except that both of them had pottery and ground stone axes associated with them. As these elements are

1. Hugh Clapperton: *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccattoo*. . . . London, 1829, p.35: "the city lying as it were, below us. . . . forming a belt round the base of a rocky mountain, composed of granite, of about three miles in length, forming as beautiful a view as I ever saw".
2. Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, London, 1832, Vol. 1. p.169: "after a hasty ride. . . . (we) beheld from a little eminence those black, naked hills of granite, at whose base lies the metropolis of Yarriba".
3. S. Johnson. *The History of the Yorubas*, Lagos 1921, p.150.
4. Phillip Allison also recorded these same two names for this hill.

lacking at Old Oyo, there is a possibility that this industry is earlier than the others, being the local representative of the large series of microlithic industries which arose all over Africa, beginning in the Magosian, and continuing in West Africa alongside pottery and ground stone axes as an important element in Shaw's Guinea Neolithic. This culture may have persisted into ethnohistoric times. In spite of the absence of pottery and ground stone axes, it is possible that the microlith users might have abandoned the Old Oyo site because of the arrival of the Oyo Yoruba. Greater certainty about the dating of all these three sites cannot be achieved with our present knowledge".

A close examination of the pottery from the Yoruba levels in the cave showed that there is no obvious change in the style of pottery from the bottom of the deposit to the top, and throughout the deposit pottery decorated with the impression of maize-cobs occurs. We shall return to this when we discuss other pottery from the site.

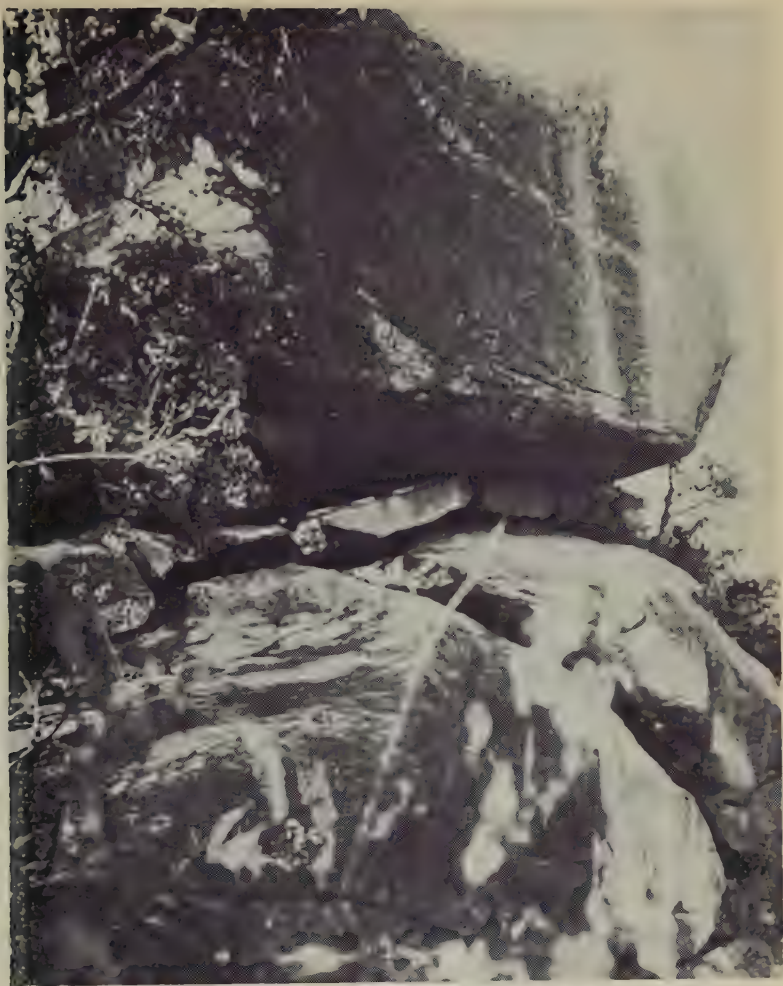
### *Rock Gongs*

A number of rock gongs were discovered at Old Oyo. Some of them have already been referred to by Bernard Fagg in his paper in the *Journal of the Nigerian Historical Society*, vol. I No. 1, December 1956, pp. 35-36. As yet there is no direct evidence for the date of rock gongs although they appear to have prehistoric roots and have continued into use until the present day in many parts of Africa. So far as I know they are not still in use in Yoruba-land. Besides the rock gongs from Old Oyo referred to in Mr. Fagg's article, (these were all in the group of rocks called Mejiro) a further one was found behind the excavated cave. This consisted of a tongue of stone, the lower end of which was buried in the ground with the stone sloping inwards at a steep angle not much short of the vertical. It had been struck on the end at the rear where it faced into a hollow in the rock. But the best rock gong of all was the one on the hill which we called, as a result of our discovery, Rock Gong Hill. This was a typical, so to speak, standard rock gong: a series of exfoliated slabs which had flaked off the upper boulder overlying a horizontal crack about three feet wide, and now lay on the lower boulder. (See Fig.1) The slabs had been struck along the outside edge, and the pits produced by this use were very well patinated. When struck with the wooden handle of a trowel very clear resonant notes were produced. In the absence of both tape-recorder and tuning-forks, no musicological investigation could be undertaken.

Rock gongs are regularly associated with rock paintings. Although no rock paintings have been found at Old Oyo, Mr. Morton-Williams discovered one at Iggetti, about 27 miles away.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See *Man*, 57, 1957, No.213.



*Fig. 1. The Rock Gong which gave its name to Rock Gong Hill.*



*Fig. 2. The outer wall of Old Oyo on the Eastern side. The ditch runs across the middle of the photograph and the wall is beyond it; the labourers are standing close to one of the boundary beacons between the Western and the Northern Regions. The relatively open tree cover on the wall and ditch will be noticed but the increasing density inside the town is obvious.*



*Fig. 3. Fragments of surviving walling on the southern side of the town.*



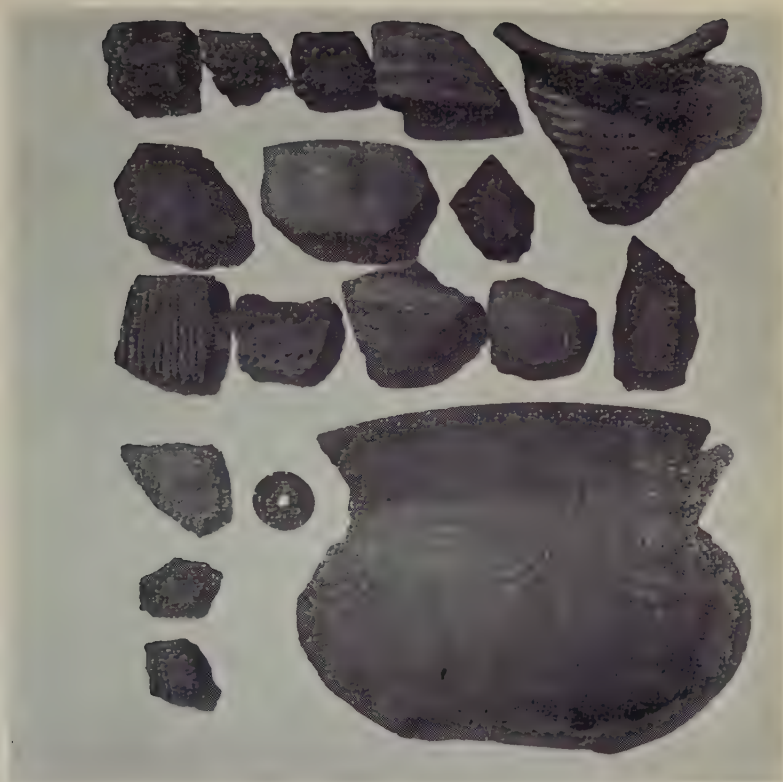
*Fig. 4. Objects found around the crucible at the foot of 'Diogun. These are described in the text.*



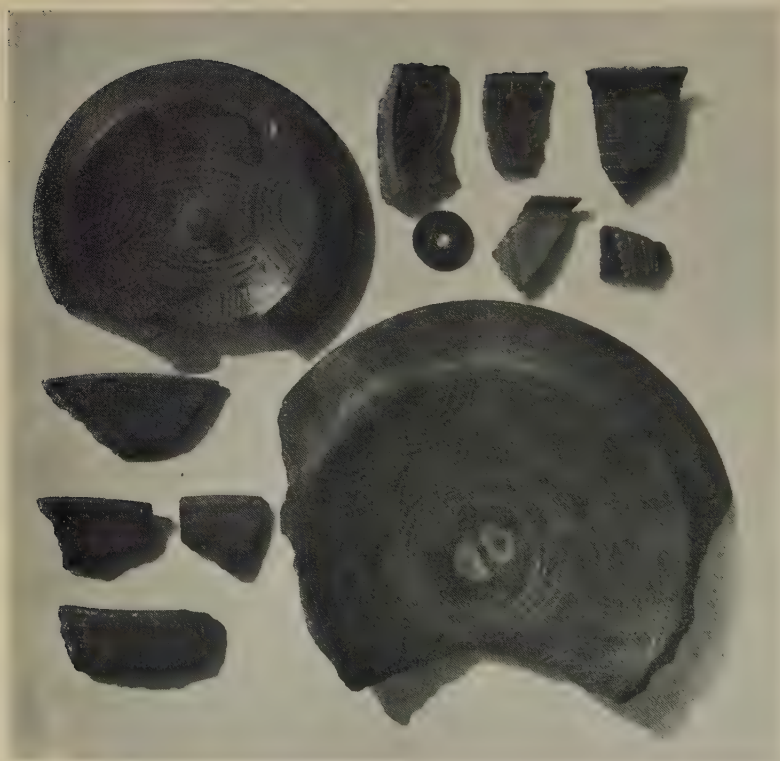
*Fig. 5. Gnawing holes on an outcrop of rock. These are described in the text*



*Fig. 6. Pottery lying on the subsoil after the surface levels had been eroded at the foot of Rock Gong Hill. The ruler in the right foreground is three feet long.*



*Fig. 7. Sherds of pottery collected on the surface at the foot of 'Diogun.*



*Fig. 8. Examples of the fine grey/black ware from the lowest Yoruba level of the cave.*

## *The Town Walls*

Hugh Clapperton<sup>1</sup> referred to the town walls of Old Oyo. He wrote:- "A belt of thick wood runs round the walls, which are built of clay, and are about twenty feet high and surrounded by a dry ditch. There are ten gates in the walls which are about fifteen miles in circumference, of an oval shape about four miles in diameter one way, and six miles the other". An examination of the walls in the present day shows that there has been some change in their condition; indeed already in 1830 Lander remarked: "The walls of the town have been suffered to fall into decay; and are now no better than a heap of dust and ruins".<sup>2</sup> Some of the gateways are certainly recognisable but I have not been able to visit the sites of all ten. In their present condition the walls present the appearance of a rampart and ditch rather than that of a wall and ditch. Evidently a ditch was dug to provide the material to make a wall of considerable substance; if it was twenty feet high it would certainly have to be several feet thick at the base. Clapperton tells us that the walls were heavily overgrown and indeed this is still the case. The deliberate cultivation of tall trees around the walls to aid the defence is one feature which has persisted and makes many of these town walls around Yoruba towns conspicuous on the air photographs. The ditch, of course, was on the outside of the wall to make a greater vertical height between the bottom of the ditch and the top of the wall. At Old Oyo, there are at least two concentric walls, possibly three, with subsidiary extra walls in certain salients for additional strengthening of the defences. For example, the outer wall on the East (See Fig. 2) is nowadays a wide low bank with very few trees growing on it; outside it, is a wide, flat-bottomed ditch full of grey mud; (at the time we were there, of course, it was dry and hard but it was quite evident that it was a favourite wallowing place for elephant in the rains). This now affords no obstacle at all, though of course it would have been much steeper and more forbidding at an earlier stage; but a mere two hundred yards from it, further inside the town, is a second line of defence, a very narrow deep ditch with a tall steep-sided bank on the inside, the whole covered with thorn bushes which have grown very densely together. This is still a very effective defence; even using matchets we could not avoid getting entangled in the bushes so that we can well imagine that the defences of Old Oyo in its heyday were considerable, and very effective.

The regional boundary between the Western and the Northern Regions forms a deliberate loop around Old Oyo and the beacons are sited on the top of the bank of the outer wall. This of course is because of the importance to the Western Region of the site of the ancient capital of the Yoruba. It should be noted however that the curious shape shown on the map on a scale of 1: 500,000 is not

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1. Clapperton *op. cit.* p.58.

2. Lander *Op. cit* p.178.

accurate. Beacon 310 is shown on an approximate right angle in the frontier, but in fact it is on a gently curving section of the wall which appears to be almost a straight line when on the spot where the beacon stands.

### *Compounds*

The traditional type of Yoruba house is built around a series of open courtyards, some small, some large. The smaller ones are usually referred to as impluvia or rain courts because the rain runs off the roof into the open courtyard, and where it is a small courtyard the space under the eaves of the house is treated as a single room with light coming in from above. Large water pots are usually placed so that they can catch the run-off of rain from the eaves of the house inside these courtyards, and also outside the compounds wherever the run-off is conspicuous. Evidence that this type of compound had been in normal use in Old Oyo was easily found. The compounds had collapsed into mounds forming hollow squares of various sizes, corresponding to the courtyards and impluvia, and large water pots often about 2 feet 6 inches in height and up to 2 feet in diameter were very frequently found in these courtyards.

After the site had been deserted for about a hundred and twenty years one would scarcely expect any more of the compounds to survive than the mere piles of earth. Yet in some cases the actual mud walls have survived, not of course complete, but as fragments in some cases three or four feet in height and running, usually interruptedly, sometimes for as much as twenty feet. (see Fig. 3) More normally one would get an individual piece of walling not more than four or five feet long. The method of building was in continuous courses about 15 inches deep running round the whole plan of the house. When one course had dried the next was added. Sections dug across the ends of some of these walls revealed that the wall material, the sub-soil on which the walls stood, and the collapsed walling on each side were absolutely indistinguishable from each other. It is therefore unlikely to be possible by the normal techniques of excavation to distinguish the exact ground plan and the precise limits of the sizes of rooms of any of these compounds. The normal technique of stratigraphical examination is also going to be severely handicapped since the building material and occupation debris form a homogenous deposit down to the sub-soil. The only hope is that we shall find pavements inside some of the compounds. Forty rounded potsherds were found of the type which in Ife is used for making pavements of broken pottery. These pavements are particularly characteristic of Ife, but there is increasing evidence that their manufacture was widespread. (The most recent discovery is of a similar pavement in Ekiti). It is possible then, that we may find pavements in Old Oyo comparable to those in Ife, where they are a great help in aiding us in reconstructing the ground plan of

houses. At one point inside the area of the palace we found two successive floors made of beaten earth or *terre pisée*. That this should have survived and been recognisable on a site which showed almost no signs of stratification in the open was quite remarkable, but it affords us hope again of establishing a vertical stratification of finds made between successive floors. In this particular case we found charcoal underneath each of these two floors which suggests that the building had been burnt down and rebuilt on two successive occasions, but a larger excavation at that particular point will be needed to establish this, as the evidence turned up in an exploratory well-shaft.

A section across a completely collapsed compound on the North side of Mejiro had to be left unfinished when the water supply dried up. It was evident that no stratification or structural features could be detected, though if the drought had been less acute, spraying with water might have revealed differences in colour or texture. One of the problems was the difficulty of distinguishing sherds contemporary with the final occupation and collapse of the building from the sherds of earlier date incorporated in the wall material by the technique of puddling the mud on the site. Complete pots and large fresh fragments may be taken as contemporary with the occupation; small abraded sherds are almost certainly from the wall material; sherds of intermediate size and condition are unclassifiable, except on other criteria. This problem arises on all the occupation sites in Southern Nigeria, and the experience gained in this one trench was most valuable in excavating the shrine of terra-cotta figures at Ita Yemoo.<sup>1</sup>

### *Areas of the Town*

A number of different areas within the town can still be recognised and the hunters who visit the site are able to tell one the location of the palace, of the house of the Arẹmọ or eldest son of the Alafin, of the King's Market, and of the palace garden. A careful examination of these areas, in conjunction with the accounts left by Clapperton and the Landers, confirms the accuracy of these traditions.

### *The Afin*

The Afin or palace is quite clearly recognisable and covers a very substantial area, probably something of the order of one square mile.<sup>2</sup> It is quite close to Mejiro where we made our base camp, and consists of a series of mounds forming hollow squares of varying sizes representing former courtyards. The part of the palace where

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1. See F. Willett, *Bronze and Terra-cotta Sculptures from Ita Yemoo, Ife*, in *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 14, No.56, pp. 135/7.
  2. This is also Clapperton's estimate. *Op. cit.* p.58: "The King's houses and those of his women occupy about a square mile".

visitors were received is still pointed out; here were found many fragments of large water (or perhaps beer-) pots, and two carved house-pots.

### *The House of the Arẹmọ*

This house has been referred to by many of the recent visitors to Old Oyo, for it was said to be the only one of which traces of the actual walls still survived.<sup>1</sup> As I have mentioned above, this is not true; we found remains of house walls in other parts of the town. It was some time before we could get the area of the House of the Arẹmọ completely cleared of vegetation but when we had done this we found a large number of very small fragments of wall apart from the small number of large fragments which appeared to constitute the front wall of the house, or at any rate a major outside wall. Unfortunately the plan did not make very much sense as there was too much missing; it was impossible to establish a satisfactory interpretation of the remaining fragments. However the house of the Arẹmọ in presentday Oyo has recently reached a stage of collapse having been unoccupied for a considerable time. It has been surveyed by a member of the staff of the Department of Antiquities and we hope that the plan of this house, built presumably soon after the foundation of New Oyo, will throw light on the proper interpretation of the fragmentary remains of the House of the Arẹmọ at Old Oyo, and will be able to guide future excavations there.

### *The King's Market*

The King's market is notable as being scarcely overgrown at all; merely a light grass cover is found. The deposits here have eroded extensively because it is very close to the foot of the hills and the rain-water rushing from the hills has eroded the upper deposits. A number of well shafts were dug in this area to discover whether there was any deposit of pottery; we found that the site was practically barren.

### *The Palace Garden*

Clapperton<sup>2</sup> describes a ceremony which took place in the palace garden; in fact he refers to two palace gardens.<sup>3</sup> At least one of them can be recognised and the wall around it survives and is still referred to as the wall of the palace garden. This appears to be the one he describes in the following passage: "There is a pleasant walk through a large enclosed park at the foot of the hills, between the house of the king and that of his wives enclosed by a clay wall. Some parts of the park are planted with corn, yams, etc., and others studded with beautiful shady trees."<sup>4</sup>

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1. This was alleged to be because the Aremo insisted on mixing shea butter with the mud.
  2. Clapperton *Op. cit.* p.53.
  3. *Ibid.* p.58.
  4. *Ibid.* p.49.

## Bara

Bara the ancient burial place of the Alafins of Oyo is some distance away from Old Oyo to the North. My guides indicated that it was about 13 miles beyond beacon 310 the most northerly point of Old Oyo which we visited. They were unwilling to take me to the place and declared that it was much too far to go. Enquiries made later in New Oyo of members of the court revealed that on the occasion of the present Alafin's accession to the throne he had visited the old site of Bara to pay his respects to his predecessors on the throne, accompanied by many members of his court. It was done in a day trip there and back from Mejiro where the Alafin himself and the members of his court had made their camp. As far as could be established Bara lay about eight miles from Mejiro. It is possible of course that my guides exaggerated the distance because they felt afraid to visit such a site. No Alafins of New Oyo have been buried at the ancient site of Bara. A new Bara was founded near the new town of Oyo and this is where the recent Alafins have been buried.

## House Posts

Many of the recent visitors to Old Oyo have referred to the frequency with which wooden house-posts survive. It is rather remarkable that any timber should survive in Nigeria for a hundred and twenty years. A large number of these house-posts were examined. Mr. Fagg was with me in the earlier stages. We discovered that a great many of the timbers which our guides showed us, and presumably had shown other visitors, as house-posts, were in fact the stumps of truncated trees of which the upper part had burnt away, for when we pulled up one or two we could see that there were roots still on the bottom. They were of a resistant timber which had been burned on the outside, losing the bark, and the wood had weathered and cracked so that in some cases a suggestion of carving could be imagined. At first we suspected that there were no house-posts at all surviving, but later in the course of the season I discovered two carved house-posts and four house-posts with tabs on the top to support the roof beams; three of these had fallen but one was still standing. These were all in the palace area and five of the six have been taken to the Museum at Ife. They are all of a resistant wood which Mr. Allison has identified for me as *Prosopis* sp. A number of plain house-posts were found in other parts of the palace. The base of one was cleared and it was found to be inserted to a depth of over three feet. There were reported also to be drum posts in the palace where the drums used to be hung during certain ceremonies. My guides could not find them and told me that they believed that they had been removed by a European not very long before my visit. There is however some suggestion that these drum-posts may have been burnt in domestic fires by hunters visiting the site.

## *The Foundry*

On the northern side of the hill called 'Diogun, the northernmost hill in Old Oyo, and just at its foot, we found the site of what appears to be a foundry. The principal feature of the site was a furnace, consisting of a hollow in the ground lined with clay in the shape of a deep crucible. It was about a foot deep and nine inches in diameter, and inserted into the side was a tuyere or clay nozzle for the insertion of bellows. The end of the tuyere had been vitrified by the heat generated by the air passing through it into, presumably, charcoal inside the furnace. Around this furnace we found a number of fragments of clay moulds. These pieces are illustrated in Fig. 4. Some of the pieces had evidently been subjected to great heat and had been vitrified to varying degrees. Two clay cylinders appeared to have been fired sufficiently to turn them into pottery, but had not been subjected to further heat. One piece appeared to be the end of a mould for casting rectangular blocks, (perhaps ingots). There was most of one rectangular slab with a rectangular hole in the centre; this had not been vitrified but three vitrified fragments of similar slabs were found. These are all apparently fragments of moulds for some substance which required great heat to liquefy. In addition some pieces of thick coarse clay with fingertip impressions were found. These had been heated but not vitrified. They appear to have been a clay luting which had been applied round the outside of the moulds to keep them in proper alignment during casting. A separate fragment of tuyere was also found. All these finds were from the surface. The only excavation was the removal of the filling from the furnace.

The problem naturally arises of identifying the material cast here. We may safely rule out iron,<sup>1</sup> which almost never becomes molten under the conditions of primitive metallurgy, and these rare occasions are accidental and beyond control. Brass (an alloy of copper and zinc)<sup>2</sup> and bronze (an alloy of copper and tin) could have been melted in this furnace. These metals however are usually nowadays cast in one stage, the scrap metal is melted in a crucible and cast into the finished object by the lost wax process. In this process the object to be cast is first modelled in wax at the same size as the finished object; the wax is then invested with successive layers of clay which are sun-dried; this mould is then heated in a fire, the wax is poured out, usually into a bowl of cold water so that it can be recovered, and

1. The fact that the site is at the foot of the hill called 'Diogun, which presumably includes the name of the Yoruba God of Iron, Ogun, is interesting, but Ogun seems sometimes to be associated with metals in general, not only iron.
2. Zinc cannot be separated from its ore by primitive metallurgical techniques; brass has to be prepared by diffusion of the zinc through the copper. Brass was prepared in Europe in this way until the Industrial Revolution. All the 'bronzes' are really brasses, as are the earliest Benin pieces. Bronze seems to have become popular only after European contacts made supplies of the alloy readily available in the form of basins, pans and later, manillas.

after prolonged heating, the mould is filled with metal to replace the "lost" wax. In this process the mould has to be broken up to extract the finished casting, and the heat is never enough to fuse the mould. It is evident that the moulds from Old Oyo are not for the lost wax process. These moulds indeed were fired first like pottery, which is sometimes done with the inside mould or core of lost wax castings of e.g. bells.

The evidence of intense heat having fused the silica in the clay suggests that the moulds, if that is what they are, were closely concerned in the smelting of the material to be cast, i.e. they might be parts of a very elaborate crucible used for preparing a material with a high melting point. It does not appear to have been glass that was melted here for traces of glass usually adhere to any clay that it touches in its molten state. It may therefore have been brass or bronze that was cast here, using a technique which is, so far as I know, unparalleled in West Africa.

### *Grinding Holes*

Almost every small outcrop of granite at Old Oyo is covered with straight rows of grinding holes. On many of the rocks the entire available surface has been thus covered. There are few places where the rock is horizontal which have not been utilized for the grinding, presumably, of food. There is a very large amount of outcropping granite, frequently in the shape of whale-backed boulders, often up to 60 feet and more in length, so that there is an enormous number of these grinding holes, many of which have been ground to a substantial depth probably reaching the limit of useful size. Their numbers alone therefore suggest either that there was a very long occupation of the site or, alternatively, that a very large population lived there for a relatively short time. It is impossible to choose between these alternatives on the evidence of the grinding holes alone. There are several types of grinding hole presumably intended to fulfil different functions. The basic type is oval, varying from a narrow oval approximately a third as wide as it is long up to a wider oval approximating to a rounded rectangle a little more than half as wide as it is long. In some cases, at one end on the upward slope of the rock, there is a shallow pit one to two inches in diameter and not more than a quarter of an inch in depth. Both these depressions have a shiny patina produced by use. It is probable that the small grinding place was used for cracking or breaking open whatever was ground in the larger hole beside it. Most of the grinding holes did not have these smaller holes nearby. A rare type was completely circular and about 18 inches in diameter. In many cases too the grinding holes were so close together that they cut into each other, both into their neighbours at the side and into those in the next line. Fig. 5 gives a good idea of how close together these holes were, and the bottom left hand corner shows where two of these holes have run into each other

laterally. What appear to be unusually long holes on the photograph are two holes end to end with a lowered division between them. Every available piece of rock was used for grinding; one of the rocks was about eight feet high with vertical sides and on the flat top above this we found that there were grinding holes. It is possible of course that the ground level has been lowered by erosion around that rock and at the time it was used the top was more easily accessible. Nevertheless, one is forced to conclude that towards the end of the occupation of Old Oyo there was some considerable pressure on the womenfolk to find grinding places to prepare the food for their men. It is possible that the solution was found of using individual boulders as grinding stones, a fashion which is still followed; indeed in towns where there are no outcrops of rock, the only possibility is to use a separate portable stone. We found a number of these grinding stones, some of them broken, but some complete.

In modern Oyo there is an outcrop of rock which bears grinding holes of a long and narrow type which is broadly parallel to those at Old Oyo but is not exactly matched there. They are used for grinding camwood which has an important part in Oyo ritual and is used for daubing on wooden images.

### *Wellshafts*

I have referred above to the difficulty we experienced with water. Among my labourers were two Bima well-diggers. They were therefore set to dig wells, primarily seeking water, but with the secondary intention of securing rapid sections through the occupation deposit to give us some indication of its thickness in various quarters. Altogether 28 shafts were sunk.<sup>1</sup> Three of them reached water, but many of them were sited an eye more on the archaeology than on the water problem. We did obtain some evidence of the extent and depth of occupation of the site. Some of the wellshafts produced five hundred or more sherds of pottery in the first foot and nothing deeper than that; others produced pottery down to six or seven feet with no more than a score or two of potsherds at each foot level; one shaft produced pottery continuously from three to twelve feet. The overall average frequency was 60 sherds in each pottery-bearing foot of wellshaft. Some of the shafts were almost completely barren of pottery; these had usually been located at sites where there was a great abundance of pottery lying on the surface of the ground. The barrenness of the sub-soil demonstrated that these places, which were all at the foot of hills, had been greatly eroded by the rain running from the hills washing away the surface soil but leaving behind the heavier fragments of pottery to lie on the exposed sub-soil.

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1. A description of the method of investigation by means of these well shafts will be found in W. R. Stanton and F. Willett: Archaeological evidence for changes in maize type in West Africa, *Man*, 60, 1960, (in the press).

## *Surface Finds*

These areas where substantial amounts of pottery lay on the ground were subjected to a careful search and very large quantities of pottery were collected and brought away for study. Pottery is of primary importance to the field archaeologist, for in its preparatory stages it goes through a completely plastic state where the merest whim of the potter can change the shape of the pot at will. As a result, although the broad forms of pot may persist over long periods, the details of the pot are liable to variation according to passing fashion. Moreover, once the pottery has been fired, its life is not very long, for it is usually fairly fragile and is not, in most societies, an expensive commodity, and not usually therefore worth repairing. It is very soon broken and thrown away as rubbish. The time lag is so slight that for most archaeological purposes the time of breakage of the pot may be considered identical with the time of manufacture. Having been broken, the pottery itself, if it has been reasonably well fired, (and even the simple firing in an ordinary wood fire is quite adequate), is almost indestructible and survives for long periods to be discovered by the archaeologist who then can establish a sequence of fashions in the pottery which can be arranged in a relative chronological order. As pottery is by far the most common find on sites later than the new Stone Age, during the course of which the manufacture of pottery appears to have been discovered, its value as a key to all other materials and objects found by the archaeologist does not need any further emphasis. We therefore took great pains to bring out as wide a range of pottery from Old Oyo as possible. The styles of pottery represented will be discussed below. Fig. 6 demonstrates the litter of potsherds on the surface of the ground.

The site had been trampled all over by large game; we found footprints of elephants everywhere. In a number of places they had trodden on complete pots and broken them, but it was remarkable that there were very many large water pots more or less intact in areas where there was clear evidence of recent trampling. Nevertheless the archaeological effect of elephants was not entirely unhelpful; at one point an elephant had pushed over a tree and from its roots a large number of sherds were collected of which 66 were considered worth keeping.

Among the fragments of pottery which were collected at the base of Rock Gong Hill were two fragments which fitted together and formed a terra-cotta head of very crude appearance but of considerable interest. This head had been described and illustrated in '*Man*' volume 59, 1959, No. 386. The two fragments which compose it consist of the greater part of the face, and the left side of the head from the eye to the occiput. The nose is broad, the nostrils have been pierced horizontally with a tapering stick, the wings did not cover the apertures at all. The one remaining eye has been made in the same way as the nostrils but the stick has perforated the clay. Four

smaller impressions made after the lips were modelled, perhaps by the tip of the same tool, give the impression of teeth. The earhole was made like the eye, and the ear itself consists of a strip of clay applied to the modelled head. . . . Behind the ear is another strip of clay which might conceivably represent hair dressed in a common Yoruba woman's style; there is no other clue of the sex.

"Since it is a surface find this head cannot be closely dated. It is unlikely to be younger than the abandonment of the city in 1837 or earlier than its foundation. Other terra-cottas are reported by local hunters at Old Oyo, but they could not find the place when I asked to see them. At the moment this must remain our only example of Old Oyo terra-cotta and an assessment of its significance is therefore hazardous. It has echoes of both Nok and Ife terra-cottas; the ear, for example bears some resemblance to that of the fine head from Olokun Walode<sup>1</sup> and the pink colour of the uneroded parts reminds one of the red paint applied to Ife terra-cottas. It is much cruder than the normal run of heads from Nok or Ife though some details of heads from both these cultures are as crude as our example. Until we have more examples of terra-cottas from the site we cannot trace its connections, though it does appear likely that there was a distinctive style of terra-cotta at Old Oyo".

Other surface finds included fragments of bracelets made in soft stone, and beads, one of them in the red stone (jasper) which is still used by the bead makers of Ilorin. From the upper levels in the cave came a tapering red-stone ear-plug of the type still in favour among Northern Yoruba women. J. D. Clarke records<sup>2</sup> that in Ilorin the stone bead industry is said to have been introduced by refugees from Old Oyo, but no direct evidence was found of the practice of the industry on the site. Beads made in this same stone have since turned up in the excavations at Ita Yemoo, Ife,<sup>3</sup> and at Ilesha.<sup>4</sup> At both these sites they formed part of the regalia. The finds from Ilesha are of the second half of the nineteenth century, but those from Ife may be earlier. In due course the presence of these beads may give useful evidence for correlating the dates of deposits all over Yorubaland, and even further afield.

### Conclusions

There can be little doubt that the site which we excavated, traditionally considered to be that of Old Oyo, is indeed the site formerly

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1. Illustrated in *An Introduction to the Art of Ife*, Lagos (Nigerian Museum) 1955, p.4.

2. *Nigeria*, 14, 1938, p.156.

3. See F. Willett, *Bronze and Terra-cotta Sculptures from Ita Yemoo, Ife*, in *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 14, No. 56, pp. 135/7, especially plate X b in which the string of barrel-shaped beads on the left is of red stone.

4. See F. Willett, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Ilesha*, *Odu, A Journal of Yoruba and related studies*. (Ibadan) No. 8, 1961. pp. 5-20.

occupied by the city of Oyo. It is also certainly the site visited by Clapperton and the Landers. Clapperton gives a mistaken longitude of 4 degrees 20 minutes East but this appears to be simply a slip. Lander gives no latitude or longitude, though his map is based on Clapperton's observations. The distances between towns along the routes which both travellers followed clearly correspond to the location of the site as well as the description of the town, and in addition, I have already given evidence of continuing tradition in modern Oyo and among the local inhabitants around Old Oyo which suggest that in fact this is the original site.

How long ago then was Old Oyo founded? The earliest levels in our excavations produced pottery with the impression of maize-cobs. Maize is an American plant which was brought back by Columbus in 1492 and could scarcely have got into West Africa before say, about 1500.<sup>1</sup> Does this mean then that Old Oyo was not founded before the sixteenth century? Mr. Morton-Williams has calculated on the basis of the evidence given by Johnson in his *History of the Yorubas*, averaging out the length of reigns, that Old Oyo, if Johnson's figures are correct may have been founded somewhere between 1388 and 1431. Other king-lists of Oyo show far more kings than Johnson's so that it is likely that Old Oyo was in fact founded earlier, and the earliest levels of Yoruba occupation have not yet been located and excavated. The actual amount of excavation we undertook was minute compared with the vast area of the city. A study of the significance of the impressions of maize both as a possible dating technique and as evidence for variation in maize type was undertaken by Dr. W. R. Stanton and is still in progress. The results of a preliminary paper will shortly appear in *Man*.<sup>2</sup>

Ignoring the coarse wares, there are essentially two major types of pottery at Old Oyo each with its own distinct and more or less exclusive distribution in the town. These are the 'Diogun style' which has a sandy paste, is fawny grey to brown in colour and is very well fired, and quite hard; the surface is not burnished. The decoration usually follows a style which one can best describe as "chip-carving", with impressed triangles forming raised zig-zags in a variety of manners of treatment. The forms are particularly beautiful, especially some complex fluted rims which are very characteristic. A series of pieces in this style is illustrated in Figure 7. Pottery of this type has been found so far only around the foot of the hill 'Diogun' in northern Old Oyo. It was not discovered in the course of our excavations or near any of the other hills. In these places we found the other principal

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1. See *History and Archaeology in Africa*, Second Conference held in July 1957; (1959), pp. 32/3 for a discussion of the question of the date of introduction of maize into West Africa.
  2. W. R. Stanton and F. Willett: Archaeological evidence for changes in maize type in West Africa, *Man*, (in the press).

type of pottery—the fine grey/black ware. This has a very smooth hard paste; the colour is black, dark grey or light grey shading into a bluish grey which is almost white. The surface is normally burnished to quite a high sheen, the decoration is by incision which may be straight lined or curvilinear, by impressed round dots, and by roulettes made with a small roller. The forms are chiefly open bowls with convex bases and near vertical sides and *ishasun*, a round-bottomed carinated bowl with everted rim, and a lid with concave centre, bearing a knob. Pieces of this type including two lids are illustrated in Figure 8, which shows pottery from the lowest Yoruba level in the cave. Whatever the shape of the pot, it is made as thin as possible. There are also a few pieces of a burnished red ware; these are very rare and are associated with the fine grey/black wares.

In addition there are the coarse wares. These are found all over the town and consist of water pots, dye vats, perforated pots for smoking meat (which are also sometimes nowadays used for rituals) and fire pots (*adogan*) with inturned decorated lugs (the fire is placed inside these pots and the lugs support a cooking pot placed on top). More delicate examples of the coarse wares are lamps on pedestals. There are also a few tobacco pipes. The coarse wares were found everywhere in Old Oyo including 'Diogun. On some of the fragments of dye vats were flat bosses with impressed dot decoration. I discovered close parallels to these in Ilorin where I learned on enquiry that they were maker's marks, and that the potter's family came from Old Oyo. Makers' marks were also found on fine grey/black wares inside the lids of *ishasun* behind the knob; almost identical marks were found on modern Ilorin pottery bought in the market.

The mutually exclusive distribution of the two principal fine wares suggests either that there was a mixed population, (we may compare the many twin towns in Southern Yorubaland resulting from the resettlement of Oyo refugees) or perhaps more probably, since the actual fabrics are different, that there were two phases of occupation with an interruption. Since the fine grey/black wares are clearly ancestral to the modern Ilorin pottery which is chiefly black and follows the same forms (although the paste is much inferior and the decoration is usually burnished not incised) the 'Diogun wares would appear to be earlier. The paste of the 'Diogun wares is less smooth and the pots fired less hard than the grey/black ware, although the forms seem to be more sophisticated. If this interpretation of the pottery styles is correct the two phases would be from the foundation to the transfer to Igbohoo, and from the return from Igbohoo to the collapse about 1837. The desirability of archaeological investigations at Igbohoo is evident.

There seems to be no relationship between any of the Old Oyo pottery and that of Ife earlier than the nineteenth century. If Oyo was founded from Ife it appears to have been an entirely male migration. The *ishasun* which dominates the Old Oyo ceramic occurs only very late and rarely at Ife proper, although in Modakeke where Oyo

refugees (who had settled first in small towns in Origbo) were allowed to settle sometime before 1849, it is very common, and paste and decoration, as well as form, are seen to derive from the Old Oyo ceramic. It would appear that the Old Oyo ceramic might have roots in a tradition older than the Yoruba occupation; indeed pots similar to the *ishasun* can be found among present day pagan tribes further North, (although of course, these might be imitations of the Yoruba pottery, not collateral descendants from a putative common ancestor). Indeed the lower part of the *ishasun* is not unlike a wider version of the campaniform beaker of Bronze Age Spain and North Africa, with which it would be foolish to suggest any connection in the present stage of our knowledge.<sup>1</sup> A parallel decoration of certain 'Diogun pots with some excavated by Jacques Nenquin at Sanga in Katanga, Belgian Congo may be more significant.<sup>2</sup>

Sherds of the grey/black ware have been found in large numbers at Esie, Ilorin, which according to some accounts was founded from Old Oyo during the reign of Abiodun. As these sherds appear to be identical with the Old Oyo ceramic it is possible that they were obtained by trade. It is desirable to check the pottery styles both ancient and recent of all the towns claiming foundation from Old Oyo, whether before or after the collapse, for it is remarkable that although there is an affinity between the Old Oyo and the Modakeke ceramics there seems to be no similarity at all between the Old Oyo and the modern Oyo ceramics. The evident descent of the modern Ilorin pottery from that of Old Oyo, confirmed by cautious enquiry about the antecedents of modern Ilorin potters, is of particular interest, for in an entirely prehistoric context one might have inferred that the Oyos over-ran Ilorin, whereas there is clear historical evidence that the opposite occurred. Conventional history records primarily the movements of the men in a society; the pottery, on which the archaeologist relies, indicates the movement of their womenfolk. These movements may well be in opposite directions. An extensive series of small excavations throughout Yorubaland would not only throw some light on the nature of the migrations from Ife and Old Oyo, but might make a substantial contribution to the methodology of ethnohistoric research and of archaeological interpretation in general.<sup>3</sup>

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1. In 1957 I collected at Ara (Ijero) in Ekiti a pot which was identical not only in form but also in decoration with a type B beaker of the British Early Bronze Age. It was a freak, made by a child who was just learning the craft, and bore no resemblance to the pots normally made in the village. The pot is now in the Manchester Museum.
  2. See *Man.* 59, 1959, 242.
  3. This article was composed in a hospital bed. I should like to acknowledge the efforts made on my behalf by James Packman and Peter Lloyd without whose bibliographical and other help I should have been even more handicapped.

PRELIMINARY INVENTORY OF THE RECORDS  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR  
POSTS IN WEST AFRICA, 1856-1935

*(Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State)*

*Compiled by*  
E. J. ALAGOA

INTRODUCTION

THE interest of the United States in West Africa began in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It was concerned then with arresting the importation into America of slaves from the West Coast, cooperating with the British to patrol the Coast, and the settlement of the slaves recaptured from slavers operating there. But these early American resettlement programs—first on Sherbro island, Sierra Leone (1820) and then at Cape Montserrado, Liberia (1821)—were the achievement, in the main, of the American Colonization Society and certain State Colonization societies. From time to time the Government appointed agents for liberated Africans in Liberia, but the sprouting of American consular posts in other parts of West Africa and nearby islands in the Atlantic Ocean resulted from Commercial interests.

On October 17, 1833, W. M. Haxton was appointed as the first United States consular officer in West Africa, to serve as consul at Bathurst on the River Gambia. His appointment was confirmed February 10, 1834, and he assumed the duties of his office at Bathurst on May 12, 1834. The post at Bathurst was in turn a consulate, a commercial agency, and a vice-consulate, and when the office was ordered closed on April 14, 1900, its archives were transferred to the consulate at Goree-Dakar.

The consulate at Goree-Dakar, Senegal, was the first American post in French West Africa, a consul being appointed to it on September 27, 1883. On January 16, 1890, an agency was created under it at St. Louis, Senegal. When the consulate at Goree was closed in June 1905, both its archives and those of the St. Louis and Bathurst offices were taken to the consulate at Sierra Leone, British West Africa.

The United States consular post at Freetown, Sierra Leone, was formally established when John E. Taylor was given official recognition as commercial agent on October 15, 1858. It became the only American consulate in West Africa outside Liberia after 1905, keeping custody of the records of the defunct posts at Goree-Dakar, Bathurst, and St. Louis. When the triple city of Dakar (with Goree and Rufisque) became the headquarters of French West Africa, the consulate at Sierra Leone was removed there. The Sierra Leone office was closed on March 30, 1915.

Thenceforth the Dakar post served American interests in West Africa outside Liberia. On March 29, 1928, the consulate at Lagos, Nigeria, was opened, the consuls at Dakar and Lagos agreeing to the delimitation of consular districts indicated in the introduction to the Lagos records. The Dakar office, however, was closed on September 3, 1931, and its archives, along with those of Bathurst, Goree, St. Louis, and Sierra Leone, were moved to the American Embassy in Paris. From there they were taken to the State Department, Washington in 1947 and transferred to the National Archives on June 2, 1948.

The United States Foreign Service posts in Liberia were essentially distinct from the other posts in West Africa. A commercial agent was appointed for Monrovia April 8, 1848, and on March 11, 1863, a commissioner and consul general. An American legation and consulate general was thus established in the only independent Negro republic on the West Coast of Africa. Subordinate agencies were set up at Grand Bassa and Cape Palmas, Liberia. When a consular agent was appointed at Elmina for the Gold Coast (present day Ghana), British West Africa, on January 2, 1879, he was also put under the Minister Resident and Consul General at Monrovia. The archives of Elmina were accordingly shipped to Monrovia when its office was closed on June 26, 1900.

The general function of the consular representatives was to foster American trade and protect American citizens. They rendered essential services to American trading vessels, seamen, missionaries, and traders residing in West Africa. As all the West African posts were maritime, the consular officers kept records of American vessels arriving and departing and of American import and export trade, and they reported home on any developments believed to affect American commercial interests. The post at Monrovia served these consular duties as well as purely diplomatic functions. The Minister's diplomatic duties were concerned mainly with watching the progress of the infant republic and with advising the United States Government on how to help maintain the finances of Liberia and to ward off the encroachment of European powers on Liberian territory and independence.

Officers at the more important posts (e.g., Monrovia) were appointed in the United States. In the case of the minor posts, they were either Europeans already serving other powers as consular repre-

sentatives, Americans doing business or otherwise employed on the Coast, or educated natives of the district concerned. The post officers carried out their duties alone, employed temporary clerks from time to time, or appointed their assistants on the spot.

The records of the various posts are similar in form and character as they result from similar activities.

The records described in this inventory belong to Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. They are both complementary and supplementary to records in Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State. Both record groups contain communications and other papers transmitted between the Foreign Service posts and the State Department in Washington. In Record Group 45, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, are materials dealing with the African slave trade and Negro colonization. Papers relating to the slave trade and its suppression are to be found in Record Group 21, Records of the District Courts of the United States; Record Group 48, General Records of the Department of the Interior; Record Group 60, General Records of the Department of Justice; and Record Group 118, Records of the United States Attorneys and Marshals.

Outside the National Archives, the Library of Congress keeps private papers relating to the slave trade and Negro colonization in West Africa.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES LEGATION AT MONROVIA, LIBERIA

UNITED States interest in Liberia began in December 1821 when Lieutenant Robert F. Stockton of the U.S. Navy cooperated with Dr. Ely Ayres, agent of the American Colonization Society, to purchase the settlement at Cape Montserrado for the first group of freed slaves. Liberia was declared an independent republic in 1847. Although American consular posts were established in Liberia as early as 1856, the first diplomatic appointment was not made until March 11, 1863. The diplomatic representative was, however, the same person as the consular representative and he was known as the United States Minister Resident and Consul General. The Foreign Service post at Monrovia was itself known as the Legation and Consulate General.

Diplomatic and consular records were kept separate, but some of the books described below contain scattered consular documents. The Legation's records were transferred to the National Archives in 1950.

DESPATCHES SENT TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1864-91, 1903-10.  
5 vols. 1 ft. 1

Acknowledgements of circulars and despatches, reports, and requests for instruction. Included are reports on tours of Liberia, commerce, agriculture, the activities of American visiting commissioners, and Liberian wars with native tribes, financial difficulties, and boundary disputes with Britain and France. Also included are a few consular reports on the estates and the effects of deceased Americans, tidal observations, and commodities and goods in trade (ivory, palm oil, piassava, cotton, rice, haberdashery, boots, shoes and other clothing). Most of the volumes are indexed (alphabetically by subject). Arranged chronologically.

DESPATCHES RECEIVED FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1871-1910.  
5 vols. 1 ft. 2

Instructions, acknowledgements, circulars, and inquiries. Included are papers containing information on negotiations, treaties, and international conferences or conventions, and correspondence transmitting foreign protests to the Liberian government or requesting information on Liberian-native wars and the necessity of United States intervention; also included are a few consular despatches dealing with estates of deceased Americans and American seamen, reports on sanitation, and letters from the Treasury and Interior Departments. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

STATE DEPARTMENT CIRCULARS RECEIVED. 1898-1903. 1 vol. 2 in. 3

Instructions to consular and/or diplomatic officers relating to the rendering of reports and accounts, customs regulations, the authentication of pensioners' vouchers, and zoological specimens. There are a few death announcements. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE SENT. 1856-85. 1 vol. 2 in. 4

Copies of communications to the State and Treasury Departments and commercial agencies at Elmina and Cape Palmas, containing mainly statements of account. Arranged chronologically.

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED. 1862-1910. 11 vols.  
2 ft. 5

Diplomatic and consular despatches, letters, circulars, and cablegrams from the State Department in Washington, the Liberian Government, foreign legations in Liberia, subordinate American consulates, and American firms. Included are announcements of the deaths of American officials and letters of condolence; statements

of consular supplies, and accounts and the estates of deceased Americans; exchanges with the Liberian Government and foreign consuls dealing with boundary disputes, Liberian requests for American assistance in native wars and for loans; Presidential proclamations relating to suppression of the slave trade and the American Civil War; the "Report of Commissioners of the USA to Liberia" (1909) and an agreement on the basis of the report to maintain Liberian independence, integrity and financial stability. Contains many returns and correspondence of the consular agency at Elmina, Gold Coast. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged in several groups according to organization from which received and thereunder chronologically.

NOTES TO LIBERIAN OFFICIALS. 1904-12. 1 vol. 2 in. 6

Copies of notes to President Barclay, the Attorney-General, the Statistician of Liberia, the Secretary of State, the Postmaster General, the Chief of Police, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Secretary of Education, and the General Receiver of Customs. Matters treated include requests for statistics and information, the Liberian boundary with Sierra Leone, and the activities of Liberian frontier officials. There are a few letters addressed to the consuls of Great Britain and France. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

NOTES TO AND FROM THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT. 1910-12. 1 vol. 4 in. 7

Relates to the American commission on the financial stability and territorial integrity of Liberia, the Anglo-Liberian Boundary Commission, the Franco-Liberian dispute on the boundary with Guinea, and Liberian legislation on internal and external loans. Included are copies of a "Memorandum on the Foreign Relations of Liberia" by F. E. R. Johnson, Liberian Secretary of State; the Liberian Loan Act, 1911; the convention with Britain on the boundary with Sierra Leone 1911; statistics supplied by the Liberian Treasury Department and Inspector of Customs on appropriations and revenue. There are also cables and letters transmitted to or from the State Department, Washington. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

GENERAL FILES. 1910-35. 86 vols. 22 ft. 8

Correspondence with U.S. Government agencies in Washington, the Liberian Government, foreign consuls, and American citizens and firms. Included are enclosures, circulars, copies of treaties and agreements, cablegrams (some in code), instructions, and proclamations. The subjects treated are mainly the indebtedness of Liberia and its requests for assistance by the United States, European nations,

and the League of Nations; various boundary questions between Liberia and Britain and France, commissions of delimitation and the activities of officials on the frontiers; the organization of the Legation and its relations with other legations; and statistics supplied by Liberian Government departments on navigation, currency, expenditures, trade, and customs revenue. Arranged in two groups: chronologically before August 1, 1912; thereafter, according to the classification scheme summarized in appendix I below. The first group is indexed alphabetically by subject.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONSULS. 1931. 2 vols. 3 in. 9

Relate mainly to the rendering of accounts and the provision of quarters for consular officers. Arranged chronologically.

PAPERS OF THE DIVISION OF CURRENT AFFAIRS. 1934. 1 vol. 2 in. 10  
Contains confidential material.

PAPERS OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE LIBERIAN  
REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE. 1933. 1 vol. 1 in. 11

Contains the report of the Committee, its proceedings, and the memorandum of the Liberian representative.

INVENTORY OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY. 1930-31. 1 vol. 1 in. 12

These are forms listing the U.S. Government property at the Legation. Arranged in inverse chronological order.

## RECORDS OF CONSULAR POSTS

### RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE GENERAL AT MONROVIA, LIBERIA

A commercial agent was appointed to Monrovia as early as April 8, 1848, and the post became a legation and consulate general in 1862. The Consul General at Monrovia had oversight of consular agencies in Liberia and of Elmina in the Gold Coast (Ghana). The records of the Consulate General at Monrovia were maintained separately from those of the Legation and were transferred directly to the National Archives in 1950.

DESPATCHES TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1856-78, 1903-12. 3 vols.  
7 in. 13

Included are communications, memoranda, copies of minutes and resolutions of the Liberian House of Representatives, annual commerce and industries reports and papers relating to the estates of

deceased American citizens and passports. Also included are documents pertaining to the Liberian boundary disputes with Britain and France, the American Special Commission to investigate the political condition of Liberia (1909), opinions of eminent Liberians on the Commission, American Negro immigration into Liberia, and material for a monograph on Liberia collected by Ernest Lyon, Minister Resident and Consul General. The first volume contains a few letters of the American Agent for Liberated Africans. The last two volumes are indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

DESPATCHES FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1903-10. 1 vol. 2 in. 14

Contains acknowledgments of reports statements of accounts; inquiries, and instructions received by Dr. Ernest Lyon, Minister Resident and Consul General. Included are copies of bonds of appointment for a vice consul. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS SENT. 1906-12. 2 vols. 3 in. 15

Included are annual reports on commerce and industry, statements of contingent and salary accounts, copies of vouchers, lists of importers and trading firms as possible dealers in American goods and agents for American manufacturing firms, and health reports on American citizens in West Africa. Correspondents include the State Department and American firms and individuals. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS RECEIVED. 1856-64, 1903-10. 2 vols. 4 in. 16

Included are instructions, notifications and acknowledgments from the State Department; communications and requests from the Liberian Government, including a request for naval aid against tribesmen; inquiries from American firms and consuls; letters of the American Agent for Liberated Africans; copies of inward cargo manifests; lists of African slaves recaptured from slavers and a contract of the American Colonization Society for their care; and a series of replies to an inquiry concerning economic opportunities open to American Negroes in various American consular districts. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

BUSINESS LETTERS RECEIVED. 1903-10, 2 vols. 3 in. 17

Letters received from American businessmen and agencies making inquiries about commercial possibilities or advertising goods. Included is a proclamation of the consul general, dated February 11, 1909, enjoining American citizens to neutrality in a threatened local riot between the Liberian Frontier Police Force and Army. Included

too is a copy of a pamphlet on "Patriotism", the text of a lecture delivered by Dr. Ernest Lyon, Minister Resident and Consul General, at the West African University in Monrovia. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE. 1910-35. 60 vols. 14 ft. 18

Correspondence with the State Department, the Liberian Government, American firms, American and foreign consuls and individuals. These papers relate to the administration of the consulate, destitute seamen, the estates of deceased Americans, and the supplying of commercial information to businessmen and general intelligence on Liberia to the State Department. Also included are annual commercial and industrial reports and statistics of shipping, customs revenue, imports and exports. There are also letters from stamp collectors. Organized and arranged according to the classification scheme summarized in appendix I below. Some of the earlier volumes have alphabetical subject indexes.

"MISCELLANEOUS RECORD BOOK". 1856-63. 1 vol. 2 in. 19

Record of miscellaneous information not entered in other consular books. Included are copies of lists of Treasury fees received and of arrivals and departures of American vessels; letters to persons and to governments and United States agents on the West African coast; answers to State Department questionnaires on commerce and local products. Arranged chronologically.

CERTIFICATES OF REGISTRATION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS. 1907-16. 1 vol 2 in. 20

Certificates issued by the consul general declaring that a person has been registered as an American citizen. Information given includes date and place of birth, date of arrival and purpose of stay in Liberia, and names of children. Arranged chronologically.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULAR AGENCY AT GRAND BASSA, LIBERIA

The first United States commercial agent was appointed to Grand Bassa on February 28, 1868. The records of the post are incomplete and few materials relating to it are to be found among the records of the Legation and Consulate General at Monrovia. Apparently Monrovia served only to transmit communications between Grand Bassa and the State Department.

DISPATCHES TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1870-84. 1 vol. 2 in. 21

Contain narrative and statistical reports on commerce, industry, and navigation in the consular district. Arranged chronologically.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS SENT. 1872-84. 1 vol. 2 in. 22

To the Minister Resident and Consul General at Monrovia, American firms, and private persons, relating mainly to visiting American vessels and citizens, inventorying of archives, and other routine consular business. Arranged chronologically.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULAR AGENCY AT ELMINA, GOLD COAST

The United States Consular Agency at Elmina (Cape Coast Castle) came into existence when a native of the country, Mr. G. E. Eminsang, was appointed consular agent on September 15, 1883. Before that date Messrs P. S. Hamel, confirmed January 2, 1879, and Arthur Brunn, confirmed April 28, 1883, had served part-time. Both men also served as consular representatives of France and the Netherlands while serving as American representative. The single letter book described below covers mainly the administration of Mr. Eminsang. The Elmina post was subordinate to the Consulate General at Monrovia. Most of the agency's reports, returns and correspondence are scattered among the diplomatic records of the Monrovia Legation, although a few are among the records of the consulate general there. The Elmina office was ordered closed on June 26, 1900, and its archives were removed to Monrovia.

LETTERS SENT. 1883-96. 1 vol. 2 in. 23

Mainly to the United States Minister Resident and Consul General at Monrovia, Liberia, but also to British officials in the Gold Coast. Relate to the appointment of G. E. Eminsang as consular agent, the welfare of American citizens and sailors and the transmittal of returns and other consular records to Monrovia. Included are reports on minor changes in the local government of Elmina and shipping facilities between Britain and the Gold Coast. Arranged chronologically.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE AT FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE, AND DAKAR, SENEGAL

The State Department recognized the existence of American interests in Sierra Leone by appointing John E. Taylor commercial agent at Freetown on October 15, 1858. He had already been

informally appointed acting consul as early as 1853 by Commodore Mayo of the ship "Constitution". Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, contains documents for the period 1853-58. In 1915 the consul at Sierra Leone was instructed to remove himself together with the furniture and the archives of his office to Dakar, headquarters of the Government General of French West Africa. The transfer was completed by March 31, 1915. The Dakar consulate was closed on September 3, 1931.

DESPATCHES TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1869-1912. 5 vols. 10 in. 24

Included are copies of and letters transmitting statements of consular accounts and business; reports of local events and conditions that might affect American trade; and papers relating to American shipping, seamen and citizens resident in West Africa. After 1879 there are annual commercial reports containing statistics of American shipping, imports and exports and information on the social and political condition of the consular district; reports of rainfall and health; reports on various military expeditions against interior tribes in the Sierra Leone; and accounts of the activities of an Islamic movement in the Sudan. The earlier reports deal solely with Sierra Leone affairs, but the later reports touch on Nigeria and other parts of West Africa. Three volumes are indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

DESPATCHES FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1879-88, 1906-11. 2 vols. 2 in. 25

Contains acknowledgments, authorizations, and notifications, relating to the administration of the consulate and reports on produce and local conditions. Included is correspondence relating to an alleged British refusal to allow American ships into the Malacong area, agricultural shows in Nigeria, and the production of palm oil and kernel. One volume is indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

CIRCULARS FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1875-91. 2 vols. 4 in. 26

Contains printed or processed copies of circulars, American legislation relating to consular administration or foreign trade, executive orders, Presidential proclamations, and announcements. Included are instructions on procedures for the collection of data on sanitation and the issuing of passports; questionnaires pertaining to raisins, oranges, lemons, olives, and figs; and announcements of departmental appointments. Unarranged.

ACCOUNTS AND RETURNS SENT. 1894-1905. 1 vol. 2 in. 27

Copies of statements of accounts and returns sent to the State Department. Included are accounts for contingent expenses and

salaries and fees; and returns of trade between Sierra Leone and the United States and business done at the consulate. Arranged chronologically.

ACCOUNTS LETTERS RECEIVED. 1880-88. 1 vol. 1 in. 28

Letters from the Treasury Department, and the Bureau of Accounts of the State Department relating to statements of consular accounts. Arranged chronologically.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS SENT. 1869-92, 1897-98. 2 vols. 4 in. 29

Correspondence with West African officials and American customs, consular, and Treasury Department officials, relating to the welfare of American citizens and seamen, the U. S. Eclipse Expedition to the Congo (1889), and consular administrative matters. Arranged chronologically.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS RECEIVED. 1879-1909. 8 vols. 1 ft. 30

Correspondents include the State and Treasury Departments, United States consulates in Great Britain and West Africa, American business firms and missionaries, the Sierra Leone Government, and the Compagnie du Senegal et de la Cote Occidentale d'Afrique. Subjects treated include consular accounts and business; the transportation of destitute American seamen; the losses of American citizens in the 1898 native rising in Sierra Leone; the value of imports and exports; tariff charges; harbor dues; pilotage and other local trade regulations; and names of local importers. There are also consular reports on particular American trade goods, such as, tobacco, sewing machines, and household tools and on climate and health. A few volumes are indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE. 1909-1931. 85 vols. 15 ft. 31

Incoming and outgoing correspondence with the State and Treasury Departments, West African governments and officials, United States Foreign Service posts in Great Britain and on the West Coast of Africa, and American firms and citizens in West Africa. These papers relate to consular appointments, supplies, and duties towards American citizens, vessels and seamen and to businessmen's inquiries concerning trade commodities, opportunities, and contracts. Also included are copies of periodic and special commercial and industrial reports and papers relating to the collection of data for the compilation of reports. Reports and information given in answers to inquiries and circulars cover all the British and French colonies; they deal with mineral resources, agricultural products, population, commercial legislation, political changes in the territories (e.g., the 1914 amalgamation of the Nigerias), and the effect of the World War

on West African trade. Volumes prior to 1924 have alphabetical subject indexes. The records prior to August 1, 1912, are arranged chronologically; from that date they are arranged according to the classification scheme summarized in appendix I below.

"REGISTER OF LETTERS SENT". 1869-94, 1898-1913. 2 vols. 2 in. 32

Entries for each letter include date, to whom and to what place sent, subject, number of enclosures, amount of postage paid, and remarks. Arranged chronologically.

"REGISTER OF LETTERS RECEIVED". 1869-94, 1898-1913. 2 vols. 2 in. 33

Entries for each letter include name of writer, place and date, date received, subject, number of enclosures, amount of postage paid, and remarks. Arranged chronologically.

"REGISTER OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED AND SENT". 1912-29. 4 vols. 4 in. 34

Entries for each letter include file number, name of person to whom sent or from whom received, subject, and remarks. Refers to correspondence described in entry 31. Arranged chronologically.

"REGISTER OF PASSPORTS". 1890-1930. 1 vol. 1 in. 35

Included are tabular summaries and lists giving each passport-holder's name, State or country, age, and physical description. Arranged chronologically.

"REGISTRATION FILE (AMERICAN CITIZENS)". 1917-27. 1 vol. 1 in. 36

Contains forms completed by persons who wished to register as American citizens. Each form is accompanied by two to three passport-sized photographs of the applicant. Included are naturalization forms and declarations of American citizens explaining the reasons for their long residence outside the United States. Arranged chronologically.

REGISTER OF AMERICAN SEAMEN SHIPPED, DISCHARGED OR DECEASED ("SEAMEN'S REGISTER"). 1871-1928. 2 vols. 4 in. 37

Entries for each seaman or mariner include his name, date shipped, discharged, or deceased, and payments made on his account. Arranged chronologically.

REGISTER OF AMERICAN SEAMEN RELIEVED. 1870-1929. 4 vols. 3 in. 38

Entries for each seaman include his name, the name of his vessel its master and owner, and the nature of the relief afforded. Arranged chronologically.

"RECORD OF ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF AMERICAN VESSELS". 1869-1928. 2 vols. 4 in. 39

Entries for each vessel include dates of arrival and departure, tonnage, place built, place sailed from, place bound, and quantity, value, and place of production or manufacture of cargo. Arranged chronologically.

DAILY REGISTER OF AMERICAN VESSELS ("SHIP'S DAILY JOURNAL"). 1870-1931. 4 vols. 6 in. 40

Entries for each ship include its name, tonnage, when and where built, names of owners, master, mate, and second mate, values of inward and outward cargoes, and dates of arrival and clearance. Arranged by date of arrival.

"RECORD OF QUARTERLY STATEMENT OF FEES". 1873-91. 1 vol. 3 in. 41

Summaries of fees received for services to American vessels. Arranged chronologically.

FEES RECEIVED FOR SERVICES TO AMERICAN VESSELS ("FEE BOOKS") 1879-1924. 3 vols. 5 in. 42

Entries on each vessel include its name, party paying fee, amount of fee, date, nature of service rendered, and destination of vessel. Arranged chronologically.

"ACCOUNTS WITH AMERICAN VESSELS". 1882-91. 1 vol. 1 in. 43

Register of accounts relating to shore services performed in the interest of American vessels. Entries for each vessel include its name, names of its captain and owner, place sailed from, place built, and number of American and of foreign seamen employed. Arranged chronologically.

CERTIFICATION OF INVOICES OF GOODS TO THE UNITED STATES ("INVOICE BOOK"). 1870-1920. 1 vol. 1 in. 44

Quarterly statements of invoices certified for goods purchased or manufactured within the consular district for export to the United States. The information in each certification includes the name of the vessel or party receiving the service, the character of the goods, the place of its production or manufacture, and its value. Arranged chronologically.

"REGISTER OF LANDING CERTIFICATES". 1912-28. 1 vol. 1 in. 45

Certifications of the arrival and unloading of goods listed on bills of lading. Information given for each cargo includes date of unloading, names of vessel and master, loading port, identifying marks on

goods, numbers and contents of packages, date on bill of lading, names of shipper and consignee, and date of certificate. Arranged chronologically.

SHIPMASTERS' DECLARATIONS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE NOTE OF PROTEST"). 1869-1930. 2 vols. 3 in. 46

Sworn declarations before the consul as to the possible effect of rough weather on the vessel and its cargo. Arranged chronologically.

SHIPMASTERS' EXTENDED DECLARATIONS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE EXTENDED PROTEST"). 1869-1930. 2 vols. 3 in. 47

Similar to those described in entry 46 but containing detailed information as to actual rough weather encountered and resultant damage or loss to the cargo or vessels and delay in arrival. Arranged chronologically.

"FEES AND SALARY ACCOUNT BOOK". 1898-1908. 1 vol. 1 in. 48

Statements of accounts for salaries and allowances for individual consuls and vice consuls. Arranged chronologically.

"MISCELLANEOUS RECORD BOOKS". 1898-1931. 5 vols. 6 in. 49

Contains records that could not be conveniently entered in other consular volumes. Included are copies of local correspondence, notarial and contingent expense accounts, vouchers, inventories of furniture and of the archives of the Freetown-Dakar, Goree, Bathurst and St. Louis posts, papers relating to deceased Americans and destitute seamen, and copies of annual commercial, industrial, and agricultural reports covering territories in West Africa. Also included are letters of American missionaries and traders giving estimates of the causes and effects of and American losses in the 1898 uprising in Sierra Leone. Most of the volumes are indexed, alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE AT GOREE-DAKAR, SENEGAL

Goree, the first United States consular post in French West Africa, was opened with the appointment of Peter Strickland as consul on September 27, 1883. The office was closed and its archives taken to the United States consulate at Freetown, Sierra Leone, on June 25, 1905. The records inventoried below cover this period of Mr. Strickland's work at Goree, but Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, contains a little correspondence dated

in 1906 between Mr. Strickland and the State Department relating to an unsuccessful attempt to reestablish the consulate. Nevertheless, the list of consular representatives in that record group (see appendix II) includes a James W. Johnson, who, apparently, served at Goree-Dakar from March 30, 1907. (During the period 1883-1905, Goree, the original town in its area, declined in relative importance and tended to be overshadowed by the immediately adjacent and growing Dakar).

DESPATCHES TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1883-1905. 2 vols. 4 in. 50

Requests for and acknowledgements of instructions and reports on labor, wages, the cost of living, communist tendencies, commercial facilities and possibilities, the yellow fever epidemic, and the consular status of Goree-Dakar. Arranged chronologically.

DESPATCHES FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1887-1905. 1 vol.  
2 in. 51

Instructions, acknowledgments, and notifications. Included are instructions relating to the organization of the subordinate consular posts at Bathurst, Gambia, and St. Louis, Senegal, consular duties generally, the preparation of reports, and the rendering of accounts. Indexed alphabetically by subject. Arranged chronologically.

"REGISTER OF OFFICIAL LETTERS SENT". 1883-96. 1 vol. 2 in. 52

See entry 32.

"REGISTER OF OFFICIAL LETTERS RECEIVED". 1883-91. 1 vol. 2 in. 53

Subtitle "Register of Despatches from Washington". See entry 33.

"RECORD OF AMERICAN SEAMEN RELIEVED". 1893-1904. 1 vol.  
2 in. 54

Entries for each seaman include date on which relief was given, nature of his relief, and an account of the circumstances leading to his need for relief. Arranged chronologically.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF AMERICAN VESSELS. 1884-1905. 2 vols.  
2 in. 55

See entry 39.

DAILY REGISTER OF AMERICAN VESSELS ("SHIP'S DAILY JOURNAL").  
1884-1905. 2 vols. 3 in. 56

See entry 40.

FEES RECEIVED FOR SERVICES TO AMERICAN VESSELS ("U. S. TREASURY FEES"). 1884-1905. 1 vol. 1 in. 57

See entry 42.

CERTIFICATION OF INVOICES OF GOODS TO THE UNITED STATES ("INVOICE BOOK"). 1884-92. 1 vol. 1 in. 58

See entry 44.

"REGISTER OF LANDING CERTIFICATES". 1883-94. 1 vol. 1 in. 59

See entry 45.

SHIPMASTERS' DECLARATIONS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE NOTE OF PROTEST"). 1884-1904. 1 vol. 1 in. 60

See entry 46.

SHIPMASTERS' EXTENDED DECLARATIONS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE EXTENDED PROTEST"). 1885-1904. 1 vol. 1 in. 61

See entry 47.

"MISCELLANEOUS RECORD BOOK". 1885-1904. 1 vol. 2 in. 62

Contains records of transactions and activities at the consulate that could not be entered in other books. Included are copies of incoming and outgoing correspondence with local officials and persons, ships' insurance papers, records of the passage of American vessels and cargo, marine protests, and documents relating to the care of American seamen. Arranged chronologically.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE AT BATHURST, GAMBIA

The list of United States consular officers in Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, gives Mr. W. M. Haxton as the first consul for Bathurst, appointed as early as October 17, 1833, but it further remarks that no records were filed by him. The extant records of the Bathurst consulate start with the appointment of Daniel R. B. Upton as commercial agent on May 8, 1858 although a few despatches for 1857 are filed in Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State. The consulate was ordered closed on April 14, 1900, but business actually ceased on June 30, 1900. The archives were transferred to the United States consulate at Goree-Dakar, Senegal.

DESPATCHES TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. 1858-89. 1 vol. 2 in. 63

These relate to suggestions for the shipment of supplies to and the status of the consular post, the increase of American trade on the Gambia River, summaries of fees collected from American vessels, and consular accounts. Included are a copy of a decree promulgating the convention between France and England relative to Portendric and Albreda (1857), copies of narrative and statistical reports on the population, government, and trade of Gambia, and copies of invoices. Arranged chronologically.

REGISTER OF AMERICAN SEAMEN SHIPPED, DISCHARGED, OR DECEASED.  
1858-74. 1 vol. 2 in. 64

See entry 37.

REGISTER OF RELIEF AFFORDED DESTITUTE AMERICAN SEAMEN. 1859-85.  
1 vol. 1 in. 65

See entry 38.

"ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF AMERICAN VESSELS". 1858-93. 1 vol.  
1 in. 66

See entry 39.

DAILY REGISTER OF AMERICAN VESSELS ("SHIP'S DAILY JOURNAL").  
1858-90. 1 vol. 1 in. 67

See entry 40.

FEES RECEIVED FOR SERVICES TO AMERICAN VESSELS. 1858-88. 1 vol.  
1 in. 68

See entry 42.

CERTIFICATION OF INVOICES OF GOODS TO THE UNITED STATES ("IN-  
VOICE BOOK"). 1859-67. 1 vol. 1 in. 69

See entry 44.

SHIPMASTERS' DECLARATIONS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE NOTE  
OF PROTEST"). 1859-86. 1 vol. 2 in. 70

See entry 46.

SHIPMASTERS' EXTENDED DECLARATIONS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE  
EXTENDED PROTEST"). 1859-85. 1 vol. 2 in. 71

See entry 47.

"MISCELLANEOUS RECORD BOOKS". 1859-1900. 2 vols. 3 in. 72

Contains copies of outgoing letters (mainly to Bathurst addresses), sworn statements of seamen as to their American citizenship and the causes of their misfortunes, proceedings of criminal trials involving American citizens, and certificates of ownership and registration of American vessels. Arranged chronologically.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULAR AGENCY AT ST. LOUIS, SENEGAL

At the request of the consul at Goree, Francis Lawton was appointed consular agent at St. Louis on January 16, 1890. Only the few records described below exist, and there are only scattered documents relating to St. Louis among the records of the United States consulate at Goree-Dakar.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF AMERICAN VESSELS. 1890-91. 1 vol.  
1 in. 73

See entry 39. The volume contains only five entries.

DAILY REGISTER OF AMERICAN VESSELS. ("SHIPS DAILY JOURNAL").  
1890-91. 1 vol. 2 in. 74

See entry 40. The volume contains data for only three vessels.

FEES RECEIVED FOR SERVICES TO AMERICAN VESSELS ("U. S. TREASURY  
FEES"). July 10, 1890. 1 vol. 1 in. 75

See entry 42. The volume contains only two entries for one day.

SHIPMASTERS' DECLARATIONS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE NOTE OF  
PROTEST"). 1890-91. 1 vol. 1 in. 76

See entry 46. The volume contains only three protests.

SHIPMASTERS' EXTENDED DECLARATION OF DAMAGE AND LOSS ("MARINE  
EXTENDED PROTEST"). 1890-92. 1 vol. 1 in. 77

See entry 47. The volume contains only four protests.

## RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE AT LAGOS, NIGERIA

The consul at Dakar obtained much needed relief when the consular office at Lagos was opened on March 29, 1928. The two consuls decided on a delimitation of territorial responsibility. The Lagos consulate was to have jurisdiction over Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the British mandates in Togoland and Cameroon, the French mandates in Togoland and Cameroon, Fernando Po, and Rio Muni. The Dakar consulate was to have jurisdiction over Mauritania, Senegal, French Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Upper Volta, the French Sudan, Niger, and Portuguese Guinea.

The records of the Lagos post were transferred to the National Archives in 1951.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE. 1928-35. 61 vols. 14 ft. 78

Incoming and outgoing correspondence with the State Department, West African governments, the United States consul at Dakar, and American business firms, relating to the establishment and administration of the consulate and requests for information. Included are reports on health, agriculture, commerce, and industry and on the economic and commercial potentialities of Nigeria. Arranged by year and thereunder by the classification scheme summarized in appendix I below.

Mr. E. J. Alagoa is an Archivist in the Department of National Archives, Enugu.

## APPENDIX I

### FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CLASSIFICATION OF CORRESPONDENCE

#### *Summary*<sup>1</sup>

CLASS	0	Miscellaneous.
	000	General.
	010	Letters of Introduction.
	020	Publications.
	030	Visits. Expeditions, Tours.
	050	Pouch Service.
	090	Testimonials.
CLASS	1	Administration, United States Government.
	100	General.
	110	Department of State.
	120	Foreign Service of the United States.
	130	Citizenship.
CLASS	2	Extradition.
CLASS	3	Protection of interests.
	300	General.
	310	Personal interests. (Ill-treatment at the hands of unofficial persons).
	320	Personal rights. (Ill-treatment at the hands of officials).
	330	Deaths. Estates.
	340	Litigation (or controversy) between persons or concerns.
	350	Property rights (as against the Government).
	360	Philanthropic institutions maintained in one country by national interests of another.
	370	Relief from military service or taxation.
	380	Fraudulent enterprises.
CLASS	4	Claims.
CLASS	5	International Congresses and Conferences. International Treaties.
CLASS	6	Commerce. Commercial relations.
	600	Statistics of trade.
	610	Trade extension.
	620	Customs laws and regulations. Customs administration.
	630	Import tariff.
	640	Food and drugs regulations.

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1. From a manual issued by the Bureau of Indexes and Archives, Department of State, 1924.

	650	Meat and live animals regulations.
	660	Exclusion of goods.
	670	Export tariff.
	680	Export bounty.
	690	Other administrative measures affecting export trade. Embargo.
CLASS	7	Relations of States.
	700	General.
	710	Political relation. Treaties.
	720	Commerce and navigation.
	730	Extra territoriality.
	740	Naturalization.
	750	Immigration.
	770	Fur seals.
	780	Fisheries.
	790	Slave trade. Liquor traffic. Opium traffic and other habit-forming drugs.
CLASS	8	Internal Affairs of State.
	800	Political affairs.
	810	Public order. Safety. Health. Works. Charities.
	820	Military affairs.
	830	Naval affairs.
	840	Social matters.
	850	Economic matters.
	860	Industrial matters.
	870	Communication and transportation.
	880	Navigation.
	890	Other internal affairs.

## APPENDIX II

### LISTS OF PRINCIPAL U.S. DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR REPRESENTATIVES AT WEST AFRICAN POSTS, 1848-1935.<sup>1</sup>

#### *MONROVIA, LIBERIA*

<i>Name</i>		<i>Date of Appointment<sup>2</sup></i>
James W. Lugenbeel	(Commercial Agent)	April 8, 1848
John J. Forney	" "	March 25, 1856
William H. Brown	" "	September 7, 1859
William Graham	" "	March 25, 1861
Abraham Hanson	" "	May 8, 1862
John J. Henry	(Commissioner & Consul General)	March 11, 1863 (Conf.)
Abraham Hanson	" " " "	June 8, 1863
John Seys	(Minister Resident & Consul General)	October 8, 1866
Francis Dumas	" " " "	April 21, 1869 (Conf.)
James W. Mason	" " " "	March 29, 1870
J. Milton Turner	" " " "	March 1, 1871
John H. Smyth	" " " "	May 23, 1878
Henry H. Garnet	" " " "	October 26, 1881
John H. Smyth	" " " "	April 12, 1882
Moses A. Hopkins	" " " "	September 11, 1885
H. J. Taylor	" " " "	March 11, 1887
Ezekiel E. Smith	" " " "	April 24, 1888
Alexander Clark	" " " "	August 16, 1890
William D. McCoy	" " " "	January 11, 1892
William H. Heard	" " " "	February 23, 1895
Owen L. W. Smith	" " " "	February 11, 1898
John R. A. Crossland	" " " "	January 16, 1902
Ernest Lyon	" " " "	March 16, 1903
William D. Crum	" " " "	June 13, 1910
Fred R. Moore	" " " "	March 1, 1913
George W. Buckner	" " " "	September 10, 1913
James L. Curtis	" " " "	December 17, 1915
Joseph L. Johnson	" " " "	August 27, 1918
Solomon P. Hood	" " " "	October 26, 1921
James G. Carter	" " " "	March 1, 1927
William T. Francis	" " " "	July 9, 1927
Charles E. Mitchell	" " " "	September 10, 1930
Lester A. Halton	" " " "	July 22, 1935

#### *GRAND BASSA, LIBERIA*

L. F. Richardson	(Commercial Agent)	February 28, 1868
H. Lafayette Crusoe	(Commercial Agent)	March 9, 1874
Henry Augustus Williams	" "	January 21, 1878
John W. Worrell	(Consular Agent)	July 14, 1881

1. These lists are based on a "List of United States Diplomatic Officers by Countries" and a "List of United States Consular Officers by Posts" in Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State.
2. The date is sometimes that of confirmation (conf.).

# ELMINA ("CAPE COAST CASTLE"), GOLD COAST

P. S. Hamel	(Consular Agent)	January 2, 1879
Arthur Brunn	" "	April 28, 1883
George E. Eminsang	" "	September 15, 1883

# FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE-DAKAR, SENEGAL

John E. Taylor	(Commercial Agent)	October 15, 1858
Henry Rider	" "	May 24, 1866
William Hogan	(Consul)	June 10, 1872
Nathaniel Lyons	"	February 20, 1874
William H. Randall	"	December 21, 1874
John A. Parm	"	June 14, 1878
Judson A. Lewis	"	May 26, 1879
B. Bowser	"	July 12, 1890
Robert P. Pooley	"	November 1, 1893
John F. Williams	"	February 25, 1898
William J. Yerby	"	June 28, 1906

# GOREE-DAKAR, SENEGAL

Peter Strickland	(Consul)	September 27, 1883
James W. Johnson	"	March 30, 1907

# BATHURST, GAMBIA

W. M. Haxton	(Consul)	October 17, 1833
Daniel R. B. Upton	(Commercial Agent)	May 18, 1858
	(Consul)	March 7, 1859
Thomas Brown	"	March 18, 1867

# ST. LOUIS, SENEGAL

Francis Lawton	(Consular Agent)	January 16, 1890
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# LAGOS, NIGERIA

Henry M. Wolcott *	(Consul)	July 14, 1916
Robert F. Fernald	"	July 14, 1927
Gilbert R. Willson	"	March 26, 1929
William L. Peck	"	July 14, 1932
Thomas A. Hickok	"	October 1, 1935

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\* Mr. Wolcott did not go to Nigeria. The office was opened by Robert F. Fernald—March 29, 1928.

### APPENDIX III

#### SELECT LIST OF SIGNIFICANT DOCUMENTS AMONG WEST AFRICAN POST RECORDS<sup>1</sup>

##### *Bathurst, Gambia*

Imperial Decree for Promulgating the Convention Relative to Portendic and Albreda Concluded Between France and England. Issued by the French Second Empire. March 7, 1857. 11 p. Handwritten. (entry 63)

Enclosure in letter from Daniel R. B. Upton to Lewis Cass, Secretary of State, August 11, 1859.

Report on River Trade on the Gambia. Despatch No. 11. From Daniel R. B. Upton to Lewis Cass, Secretary of State. August 11, 1859. 3 p. Handwritten. (entry 63)

Analyses the effect of the Portendic and Albreda convention on American trade on the River Gambia.

Report on the Colony of the Gambia. Daniel R. B. Upton. (1859). 6 p. Handwritten. (entry 63)

Gives 1851 census figures and statistics of imports and exports by countries.

(Annual Report on the Gambia). Letter from Daniel R. B. Upton to Lewis Cass, Secretary of State. December 15, 1860. 10 p. Handwritten. (entry 63)

Includes import and export statistics for 1858 and 1859.

##### *Freetown, Sierra Leone-Dakar, Senegal*

(Commercial Reports on Sierra Leone). (By various authors to the State Department). (1880-1884, 1886-1890, 1895, 1898, 1900). (159 p). Handwritten (entry 24)

Contain mainly annual narrative and statistical information on commerce, agriculture, and foreign trade, but also some other economic data and data on population, education, rainfall.

Account of a Meeting Between the Sierra Leone Government and the Rulers of the Timneh Country to Sign a Peace Treaty. Despatch No. 31. From J. A. Lewis to John Hay. September 30, 1880. 8 p. Handwritten. (entry 24)

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1. The documents are listed alphabetically by post and thereunder chronologically. Following each listing is the inventory entry number for the series in which the document occurs.

Report Regarding Samudu (Samory) and His Army. Despatch No. 188. From J. A. Lewis to James D. Porter. July 14, 1885. 8 p. Handwritten. (entry 24).

Contains extracts of Sierra Leone newspaper accounts of the Islamic movement in the Sudan.

Settlement of Liberia-Sierra Leone Boundary Dispute. Despatch No. 202. From J. A. Lewis to James D. Porter. November 23, 1885. 4 p. Handwritten. (entry 24).

Recommending Cornelius May, a Sierra Leonean, for the Vice Consulship. Despatch No. 291. From J. A. Lewis to George L. Rives, December 17, 1888. 2 p. Handwritten. (entry 24)

General Narrative Report on Sierra Leone. Despatch No. 13. From R. P. Pooley to Edwin I. Uhl. June 30, 1894, 13 p. Handwritten. (entry 24)

Report on the Opening of the Sierra Leone Government Railway and on Trade of French Guinea. From R. P. Pooley to W. W. Rockhill. April 10, 1897. 5 p. Handwritten. (entry 24)

Confusion of American Citizens by Sierra Leone Rising and Spanish-American War. Despatch No. 14. From John T. Williams to T. H. Griddler. October 28, 1898. 2 p. Handwritten. (entry 24)

Trade in French West Africa During 1911. By W. J. Yerby. August 5, 1912. 4 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Narrative and statistical.

Review of Trade in French Guinea, West Africa, 1912. By W. J. Yerby. August 19, 1913. 6 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Narrative and statistical.

Trade in Northern Nigeria, West Africa, 1912. By W. J. Yerby. September 16, 1913. 2 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Trade of Gambia, British West Africa, 1912. By W. J. Yerby. September 22, 1913. 5 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Narrative and statistical.

Amalgamation of the Nigerias, British West Africa. By W. J. Yerby. February 11, 1914. 4 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Report of the union of Southern and Northern Nigeria, January 1, 1914, with an assessment of the administrative changes involved and the effect on the economic potential and trade of the territories.

Trade Report, Gold Coast Colony, West Africa, 1913. By W. J. Yerby. September 1, 1914. 10 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Narrative and statistical.

West African Market for American Products. By W. J. Yerby. September 14, 1914. 4 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Narrative report on the effect of the war on West African trade, credits, transportation, exchange, and banking.

Trade Report on Cameroons and Togoland, German West Africa. By W. J. Yerby. October 28, 1914. 2 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Abeokuta Treaty, Nigeria, British West Africa. By W. J. Yerby. November 30, 1914. 3 p. Typed. (entry 31)

An extract from "The African World", November 14, 1914: report of Sir Frederick Lugard's treaty with the Egba United Government claiming jurisdiction over Egbaland.

Apparent Balance of Trade Between British West Africa and U.S.A., 1912 and 1913. By W. J. Yerby. December 3, 1914. 10 p. Typed. (entry 31)

Contains statistics of American goods imported into Nigeria, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone, and Gambia.

### *Goree-Dakar, Senegal*

Report on Labor Conditions in the Senegal. Despatch No. 13. From Peter Strickland to John Davis. July 19, 1884. 8 p. Handwritten (entry 50)

Contains sections on the distribution of labor, wages, the cost of living, communism, and intemperance.

French Senegal, Its Commercial Facilities and Possibilities. Despatch No. 16. From Peter Strickland to John Davis. October 22, 1884. 5 p. Handwritten. (entry 50)

Effect of French Tariff on American Trade in Senegal. Despatch No. 195. From Peter Strickland to W. W. Rockhill. August 31, 1896. 7 p. Handwritten. (entry 50)

### *Monrovia, Liberia (Legation)*

Natural Capacities, Present Condition and Future Prospects of the Republic of Liberia. Despatch No. 45. From J. Milton Turner to Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State. May 25, 1872. 17 p. Handwritten (entry 1)

Narrative report on the political situation.

Grebo Outbreak at Cape Palmas. Despatch No. 178. From J. Milton Turner to Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State. September 7, 1875. 5 p. Handwritten. (entry 1)

Report on a war between the Liberian Government and a tribe.

Report on American Shipping and Trade in the Gold Coast. From P.S. Hamel to John H. Smyth. October 10, 1878. 2 p. Handwritten. (entry 5)

Contains a few statistics for 1875-77.

Threat of War between the British and Ashanti. From Joseph Upton to J. H. Smyth. March 11, 1881. 2p. Handwritten. (entry 5)

The Needs of the Consular Service on the West African Coast. Despatch No. 33. From John H. Smyth to John Davis. June 14, 1883. 13 p. Handwritten. (entry 1)

Narrative commercial report and assessment of West Africa.

Annual Report for Liberian Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1884. Despatch No. 96. From J. H. Smyth to James D. Porter, Assistant Secretary of State. May 11, 1885. 10 p. Handwritten. (entry 1)

Narrative report on trade, navigation, and agriculture.

Petition Against Proposed Franco-Liberian Treaty Ceding Territory. From American Colonization Society to Walter Gresham, Secretary of State. June 26, 1893. 13 p. Typed. (entry 2)

Gives history of Liberia and of the Society together with extracts of agreements entered into between American and Maryland State Colonization Societies and the Liberian Government.

Report of the Commission of the U. S. A. to the Republic of Liberia. (From the Commissioners to the Secretary of State.) October 6, 1909. 45 p. Typed. (entry 5)

An account of Liberia's financial, political, and frontier problems and related recommendations. The commissioners were Roland P. Falkner, George Sale, and Emmett J. Scott.

Settlement of the War of 1875-76 Between the Liberian Government and the Grebo United Kingdom. Captain A. A. Semmes, United States Navy. n.d. 12 p. (entry 5)

Contains report of proceedings of Captain Semmes' arbitration meetings with representatives of both parties.

## PETER NICHOLLS—OLD CALABAR AND FREETOWN

by

CHRISTOPHER FYFE

PETER Nicholls spent most of his life outside the territories that today comprise Nigeria. But he was born there, and Nigeria perhaps can claim him along with many other Sierra Leone recaptives as a migrant son.

He was born about 1809 in one of the towns forming Old Calabar. His father was killed when he was an infant. Three or four years later his mother was accused of causing a war between their town and a neighbouring town. She was killed and he was sold as a slave.<sup>1</sup>

This account of his enslavement (which he wrote later in life) illustrates what many writers neglect—that victims of the slave trade were often criminals convicted of witchcraft, or of being associated with witches, not merely prisoners of war.

He was taken down to the riverside, kept there 9 or 10 days, then put on board ship to be taken across the Atlantic. But the ship was captured by a British naval vessel. He was taken to Sierra Leone instead, landed there and freed.

After the British Parliament illegalized the slave trade in 1807, Freetown became a centre to which slave-ships were brought for condemnation. A Court of Vice-Admiralty was constituted there to hear cases and, in 1819, the international Courts of Mixed Commission. In the early days the freed recaptives were apprenticed as servants in Freetown, or enlisted in the forces, or sent to form villages nearby, where they were left to fend for themselves. Sir Charles MacCarthy (governor of Sierra Leone, 1816-24) introduced a more positive policy. He persuaded the British government to join with the Church Missionary Society in turning the recaptives into agents through whom Christianity and European ways could spread out over West Africa.<sup>2</sup>

The C.M.S. sent missionaries to take charge of the larger villages and organise the recaptives. They were official superintendants with magisterial powers as well as missionaries. Churches and schools were built, and orderly villages laid out. The recaptive children were sent to school and the grown-ups encouraged (in some villages compelled) to go to church. This condominium of Church and state lasted until

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1. Methodist Missionary Society, London—*Sierra Leone* 1834-40, Peter Nicholls  
2. See particularly Public Record Office, Co 267/42, MacCarthy 74, 31.5.16

1824, when the C.M.S., unable to recruit enough missionaries for a field where mortality was high, had to give up lay superintendence and be content with religious.<sup>1</sup>

Our recaptive boy was sent to Regent village in the hills above Freetown. It was ruled by a famous missionary superintendant, the Rev. W. A. B. Johnson, a German missionary who exerted a powerful influence over his people. With the other children he was put to school. He will have taken or been given a European name, but not necessarily the one he had later in life. Many recaptives disliked the names they were given and took new ones.<sup>2</sup> "Nichol" (which is how his name first appears on any document) was quite a usual name for a recaptive to take. George Nichol was a prosperous European trader in Freetown; there was also an Army Surgeon in the Colony Dr. Nicoll.

He spent three years at school and learnt to read and write. Then he and another boy decided to run away to Freetown.

The British settlements in West Africa were garrisoned by the West India Regiments (officered by Europeans, manned by Afro-West-Indians and Africans) and the Royal African Corps (manned by Europeans, chiefly convicts, and Africans). In 1819 the Corps was disbanded. But some of the convicts were too dangerous to release, so they were eventually re-embodied as the Royal African Colonial Corps, along with Africans chiefly recaptives. In 1828 it was reduced. The European soldiers (those who had not died of drink) were sent away, and the Corps became African, with European officers.

When Peter (assuming that was his name then) went down to Freetown he got a job as servant to a European sergeant. Then in 1825 he enlisted as a soldier.<sup>3</sup> His name first appears on the muster rolls as "Nichol"; after a few years it became "Nichols". He usually wrote it "Nicholls" himself, and sometimes "Nicolls". I have used the former as it appears most frequently.

He was put in the band as a bugler and trumpeter. When the European N.C.O.s departed, opportunities of promotion opened for intelligent literate Africans, and in 1829 he was promoted sergeant.<sup>4</sup>

Governor MacCarthy's policy was amazingly successful (it is the foundation of the Creole achievement in West Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries. Recaptives deserted by their own gods, who had let them be enslaved, listened readily to the Christian message. They learnt English, a lingua franca in a Colony where the recaptive population was drawn from all over West Africa. They adopted new standards of living. As well as missionary precepts they had a practical example to follow. The "Settlers", the Afro-American population of Freetown, brought to the Colony in the 1790s by the Sierra Leone

1. CO 267/63, C.M.S. 12.4.24.

2. Church Missionary Society, London—CA I/013 note on 1821 list.

3. Public Record Office—W.O.12/10352 Monthly Roll, November 1825

4. W.O.12/10356 under last quarter 1830

Company, displayed a style of life they could strive to imitate—Europeanized, but still distinctive enough not to be European.<sup>1</sup>

The Wesleyans, as well as the C.M.S. had a mission in Sierra Leone, concentrated round Freetown. The Settlers too had their own churches—Methodist, Baptist and Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion—run without European supervision. So recaptives had no difficulty in hearing the Christian Gospel. It was preached in evangelical style. Church members were expected to experience conversion—first conviction of sin, then consciousness of salvation, usually accompanied by some outward manifestation, dreams, visions or convulsions. The process was called "Seeking and Finding".<sup>2</sup>

Converts had to describe their experiences, giving oral testimony as proof of conversion (which incidentally encouraged them to express themselves articulately in English). The C.M.S. asked their missionaries to send home testimonies regularly for publication in their magazines, to stir the hearts of readers in England.<sup>3</sup>

Recaptive soldiers too sought salvation. They may have been influenced by disbanded African soldiers settled in Freetown: John Lambert, a disbanded sergeant, started the first Methodist class in the Colony, in Soldier Town, just west of Tower Hill barracks. The commanding officer was horrified to discover soldiers getting up at 4 a.m. to attend religious services in town before first parade.<sup>4</sup>

In 1832 Peter Nicholls fell ill. Hitherto he had not troubled much about religion. But the hospital sergeant urged him to consider the state of his soul, and when he got better he took to attending Wesleyan services.

Here is his own testimony, an interesting example of what many were experiencing:

"... at last the word of god appear to my heart as a wound then my heart was troubled and so I turn to seek the lord with my whole heart sometime I go to churchyard and to Pray about one O'Clock in the night and sometime I Fast one day and one night Praying like wise untill at last I feel very sorrowful for my sin, then I feel that I am in a miserable state I could not sleep at night when I feel this I was very wretched sinner I could not get any rest at all in my mind. Sometime I shut door upon myself a whole day almost in Purpose to Pray and at night I go to bed about ten or eleven O'Clock to sleep and at Three O'Clock I went to the bush to Pray...once I was warn for guard I went, after guard mounting I went and spread my bed upon the carpenter table that was in the guard house as I was lying down flatt I Close my eye I pray in my heart while I continue Praying by

1. This is all described in more detail in my forthcoming history of Sierra Leone.
2. For unfavourable descriptions see CMS—CAI/059, Bultmann's journal 27.4.44; CAI/094 Frey's journal 2.4.43.
3. CMS—CAI/E6, Pratt 11.7.17.8.10.17.
4. CO 267/130 Horse Guards 1.3.35 enc.

and by I Saw one little thing small as grain sand shining untill it became a great light I get up my tears begin to run down my cheek and I was wonder how I can see light without been sleeping... on the thirteen of June 1832 as I was Fasting it was about one O'Clock in the daytime I went to my closet there the Lord Pour down his Blessing upon my Soul I saw something while I was upon my knee very great and it was very shining I could not tell what it was for there was nothing worth in this life to compare with it I feel that the lord is Pardon my sin... O what a Glorious happiness I have felt that day it was a blessing indeed to my Poor never dying soul, then I begun to feel this fire upon my heart more full while I repeat Glory to God, Glory to God and the Lamb for ever many of my Brethren and sister heard of it they run and come to hear the glad tiding of salvation then I Began to tell them what the Lord hath dont for my Soul while I continue Praising God and telling them what I have seen and felt tears drop down my cheek then they raise hymn and while they began to sing the hymn O what a Blessed hope of heaven I Feel at that moment I find that my mouth was too little to Praise the Lord for what he hath dont for my soul...".<sup>1</sup>

Here we see the convert's experience—despondency, prayer and fasting, visions, and finally, at a certain specified moment in time, awareness of salvation, proclaimed aloud for all to hear and for the fellow-elect to joy in.

While he was wrestling inwardly Nicholls had felt too preoccupied to marry. But a few days after his conversion he married. He was then posted to the detachment on the Isles de Los (today part of Guinea, but then part of Sierra Leone). There his wife turned against him, beat him (according to his own account) with a stick, and refused to cook for him. After a while he went sick and was posted back to Freetown. She went on tormenting him there, following him through the streets, cursing him and spitting at him. He also had enemies in the barracks. The Sergeant-Major reported him for spending too much time in church and neglecting his duty; one of the officers abused him as a psalm-singer. Yet despite their hostility he was promoted Colour-Sergeant.

Then he was posted to the Gambia. His wife went too. Bad though she was, he said, 'when we arrived at Bathurst she became ten times worst'.<sup>2</sup>

In 1840 the Royal African Colonial Corps was re-embodied as the 3rd West India Regiment. Henceforth it was sent back and forth, alternating with the other West India Regiments, between West Africa and the West Indies.<sup>3</sup> In 1841 Nicholls was due for posting to Jamaica. As a Colour-Sergeant he was paid 2/4d a day, just over £42 a year.

1. M.M.S.—Sierra Leone 1834-40, Peter Nicholls.

2. M.M.S.—Sierra Leone 1834-40, Peter Nicholls.

3. C.O.267/161, Horse Guards 26.6.40, 7.7.40.

Living in a town where there was little for a soldier, fed and clothed, to spend money on but drinking, gambling and women (dissipations a sober Methodist scorned) he had accumulated £407. He may perhaps also have increased his capital by trading or money-lending. This sum he offered to the Wesleyan Mission as an interest-free loan to be kept when he died. In making the offer he explained that he had no relatives—so he had presumably got rid of his wife.<sup>1</sup>

Then he seems to have changed his mind. His obituary, written years later, says he bought his discharge from the army.<sup>2</sup> There is no record of his doing so in the regimental pay records.<sup>3</sup> But, however, he effected it, he left the army and set up in Freetown in trade.

When the recaptives were settled in the Colony villages it was assumed they would farm. Many did farm for subsistence. But there were no facilities or markets for large-scale farming. The enterprising moved to Freetown (like Nicholls) to find more remunerative work. There were few jobs available. Europeans and Settlers had recaptive apprentices to do their household work and did not need to employ labour. Kru labourers did much of the heavy work. So recaptives did casual jobs—bringing in firewood to sell, or hawking fish—investing the coppers they earned in goods to sell in the streets.

These street-traders prospered. Some went up country to trade goods for produce. There were no big European firms in Freetown in the 1830s and 40s, only individual Europeans trading in a small way.<sup>4</sup> So the recaptives had little competition. Soon they were opening shops and putting their profits into buying good Freetown properties. By the time Nicholls took up trading there were many who, a decade earlier penniless ex-slaves, were now worth several hundred pounds.

The Superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission took one of these prospering traders, John Ezzidio, a Nupe recaptive, a devoted Wesleyan lay-preacher, to England in 1842 and introduced him to business firms there. Ezzidio then began ordering out goods from England, and by the 1850s was importing £3 or £4000 worth annually.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Nicholls too may have benefitted in this way. In any case he did well in business, as formerly in the army.

Though Sierra Leone was a prospering Colony in the 1840s and 50s with an enterprising business population of literate recaptives and their children, the people were allowed no share in their government. They were ruled by a Governor and Council, responsible only to the Secretary of State in London. Though taxed (in 1852, with a House and Land Tax) they were not represented. They could only voice their grievances in respectful petitions to governor or Secretary of State. Nicholls's name appears on several of the petitions of the early 1850s.

1. C. Marke: *The Origin of Wesleyan Methodism in Sierra Leone*. London 1913. p.57.
2. *West African Reporter* (Freetown), 7.1.80.
3. W.O.12/11462-3
4. Parliamentary Paper 1842.xi.pp 206-9,322,333.
5. For Ezzidio see *Sierra Leone Studies* (new series) iv, pp.213-23.

Many felt dissatisfied in Sierra Leone. The government seemed uninterested in them. There were few opportunities for large-scale enterprise. In 1839 a group of influential recaptives petitioned the government for leave to go to Badagry, whence many had originally been shipped.<sup>1</sup> The government did not encourage, but did not prevent this unofficial emigration scheme, planned and executed by recaptives. From the 1840s a steady exodus left Sierra Leone—traders, teachers, missionaries, and clerks—for opportunities elsewhere on the coast, a movement of immense, perhaps decisive, influence in the history of Nigeria.

In 1853 the Rev. Edward Jones, Principal of Fourah Bay College, an Afro-American missionary of the C.M.S., went with some Ibo recaptives to Fernando Po and the mainland opposite to prospect for a mission-site.<sup>2</sup> He also called at Old Calabar and asked the chiefs whether they would welcome Kalabari recaptives from Sierra Leone. They said they would. In October 1854 a party arrived by the mailsteamer, mostly elderly illiterates come to end their days in their own country. Rather than live among their non-Christian relatives they settled round the Presbyterian Mission station.<sup>3</sup>

As well as these humble settlers, Peter Nicholls returned. He went to live at King Eyo Honesty's town, Creek Town. He had left Old Calabar in chains, an obscure little slave-boy. He returned respectable and well-to-do, the kind of sober, industrious, self-made merchant found among the rising bourgeoisie of contemporary Europe.

He began trading in Palm-oil, defying the monopoly of palm-oil trading established there by Liverpool traders. Like other Freetown shopkeepers he was in touch with firms in London, and ordered out goods by the mailboat to barter for palm-oil.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Dike tells the story in his *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*.<sup>5</sup> In October 1855 Captain Joseph Cuthbertson a Liverpool trader, seized 16 puncheons, holding 6 tons of oil, which Nicholls had bought, alleging that the vendor, King Eyo Honesty, was bound to sell to him.

Nicholls went to Fernando Po and complained vainly to the acting-Consul. Then he returned to Freetown to complain to the governor. In Freetown he met the new Consul, T. J. Hutchinson, on his way out. Hutchinson promised help, and on arrival warned Cuthbertson that if he didn't give up the oil the Foreign Office would prosecute his principals in Liverpool. Cuthbertson unwillingly submitted but, threatened to break Nicholls's head if he ever came trading to Old Calabar again.

1. CO 267/154, Doherty 75,30.11.39 enc.

2. C.M.S.—CA1/0129 Rev E. Jones, Journal to Fernando Po.

3. F.O.84/1001, Hutchinson 24.6.56 enc.

4. F.O.84/1003, Hill 27.10.56 enc.

5. K. Onwuka Dike: *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*. Oxford, 1956. pp.119-20

In fact Cuthbertson only sent Nicholls 4 tons of oil to Freetown, not 6. By the time it arrived the price of oil had fallen from £53 to £35 a ton, so Nicholls was in any case heavily out of pocket. He went to England to take legal action. But no English court could prosecute for an offence committed at Old Calabar, beyond British jurisdiction. Neither Nicholls nor the Foreign Office (had Cuthbertson called Hutchinson's bluff) had any power to bring him to justice.<sup>1</sup>

So Nicholls gave up Old Calabar and went back to trading in Freetown where he had large premises in Rawdon Street. Perhaps he was not sorry: presiding at the Wesleyan Missionary Society Annual Meeting at Wellington village in 1856 he contrasted the peaceful, orderly Christian Colony with the barbarous superstitions he had been obliged to witness at Old Calabar.<sup>2</sup> By now he had remarried. His new wife, Mary Ann, was much younger (and we will hope pleasanter) than her predecessor.

When MacGregor Laird founded the African Steamship Company and began sending regular mailsteamers (from 1852) to West Africa, he deliberately kept fares as low as possible to encourage African businessmen to visit England.<sup>3</sup> Nicholls became a regular passenger on the mailboats, going back and forth to England, establishing his credit with his correspondents there, and ordering out consignments for sale. In Freetown at this time there was no specialized retailing. Shopkeepers sold everything, and attracted custom by advertising newly-arrived goods in competition with their neighbours, rather than by specialising in one particular line.

In October 1858 the Rev. W. L. Neville, embarked from England on the mailsteamer *Armenian* to go as a missionary to the Rio Pongas Mission, a mission in the rivers north of Sierra Leone (today in Guinea) sponsored by the Bishop of Barbados, supported by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. It was his first visit to West Africa.<sup>4</sup> Passengers had a poor time on the mailboats in the 1850s. They were packed into a tiny cabin. The screw-propellor hammered ceaselessly. The captains were often incompetent and reckless: many of the first steamers were lost through their carelessness. Once the *Armenian's* captain took off his clothes in a drunken fit and tried to force his way into the ladies' cabin. But on Neville's voyage nothing exciting happened, beyond the chief officer's opening the cabin port-hole (from the purest motives, he explained) and drenching the passengers' berths and luggage.

Neville found six Africans travelling first class. Five were from Cape Coast. They formed a merry group, sitting on deck

1. F.O.84/1001, Hutchinson 12.3.56, 24.6.56.

2. *The African* (Freetown) 27.3.56. (quoted by kind permission of Mr. David Williams.)

3. Parliamentary Paper 1852, xlix, 438.

4. W. L. Neville: *Journal of a Voyage from Plymouth to Sierra Leone* (ed. Caswall). London. 1858.

chatting and laughing, with their servant, an African in page-boy uniform in attendance at a respectful distance. The sixth was Peter Nicholls.<sup>1</sup> He was reserved and aloof, kept himself to himself, and spoke to no one. Neville, however, penetrated his reserve, and got him to talk about missionary prospects. He said he thought it was little use trying to convert adults, who were set in their ways, particularly polygamy, and that Neville should concentrate on children. "I think", he said, "you will find it harder to convert Mohammedans than worshippers of idols. "Neville asked whether a chief might not be induced to wear European clothes (as a first step to Christianity) if he were given a pocket watch which he could only wear if he had pockets. Nicholls replied that "he knew a chief to whom both watch and clothes had been given, but he, in a short time, laid aside the latter and hung up the former".

Nicholls seemed old to Neville. His hair was white; Neville described him as "elderly". But he cannot have been more than about 50.

A Mercantile Association was started in Freetown in 1851, to represent business interests, African and European.<sup>2</sup> But there was little solidarity in the business community: all tended to compete fiercely as individuals. The Association kept fading away, though was several times revived. Nicholls was a member in the late 1850s. He signed a petition in 1858 in which the Association demanded a new constitution with an elected House of Assembly.<sup>3</sup> His name however does not often appear on petitions. He seems to have been more interested in business than politics. But it is dangerous to deduce too much from the absence of names on petitions: he may have been ill, or busy, or away in England, when signatures were being collected in Rawdon Street.

In 1863 a new constitution was at last introduced, though not on the radical lines demanded in 1858. The Governor's Council was abolished, and an Executive Council and a Legislative Council substituted. The governor was empowered to nominate two unofficial members of Legislative Council. Governor Blackall in 1863 decided to let the mercantile community choose one of them. The 39 leading business men (including Nicholls) were asked to revive the dormant Mercantile Association and elect a representative.

14 of the 39 were Europeans, one an Afro-West-Indian, 24 Africans—recaptives or men born in the Colony. Two candidates were put up, John Ezzidio, and a European trader, John Levi. As if to show his detachment from local political interests, Nicholls proposed Levi's name. But it seems unlikely that he voted for him. Voting was by

1. Neville's account calls him N—, but it is plain from a reference in *The African* 10.9.58. that it is Nicholls.
2. Sierra Leone Archives (University College of Sierra Leone)—Colonial Secretary's Letterbook, 2.8.51.
3. CO 267/260, Hill 29, 17.2.58 enc.

secret ballot but the votes seem to have been divided by colour—23 for Ezzidio, 13 for Levi (and one apparently voting against both).<sup>1</sup>

This elective procedure was never used again. In future vacancies the governor recommended Members of Legislative Council on his own responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

Nicholls went on visiting England in the 1860s. In 1865 the Superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission gave him an introduction to the Parent Committee in London. In 1872 there was a proposal to open a bank in Freetown, sponsored by an English firm which traded on the coast. The business community was pleased, as it would enable them to remit money direct to wholesale dealers in England without having to rely on commission agents. Nicholls signed a petition in favour.<sup>3</sup> But the British government were suspicious of private banks—and their suspicions were justified when the sponsoring firm went bankrupt and the scheme was dropped.<sup>4</sup>

This is the last petition on which I have noticed Nicholls's name (though I may have overlooked some). In 1876 his Rawdon Street premises were burgled.<sup>5</sup> He was not living there though. The upper floor, above the shop, was let to a tailor and shoemaker. His private residence was in Soldier Street, with Zion-on-the-Hill church and the Wesleyan Mission headquarters nearby.

On January the 1st 1880 he died.<sup>6</sup> His wife outlived him and died in their Soldier Street house in October 1897.<sup>7</sup> Their son Peter entered government service and rose to be Chief Clerk in the Railway Department. Another son, Benjamin, became a well-known Freetown tailor (and had a son Ernest who was in the Telegraph Department in Northern Nigeria).<sup>8</sup> A daughter, Ellen, married J. Bright Davies, then a government clerk, who was later to edit the *Gold Coast Independent* and *The Times of Nigeria*; they were divorced after a couple of years.

Peter Nicholls's life seems to span unrelated worlds. Glimpse him at any one moment—and who would imagine the preceding or subsequent stages? The Kalabari slave-boy, sold because his mother is a witch; the pious sergeant, pouring out ungrammatical ejaculations about the state of his soul; the taciturn businessman travelling regularly to England first-class on the mailboat. Yet similar transformations mark the careers of all the successful Sierra Leone recaptives.

1. CO 267/278, Blackall 152, 16.12.63.

2. For comment see J.D. Hargreaves in *Sierra Leone Studies* (new series) v, 2-10.

3. C.O.267/316, Hennessy 115, 7.9.72 enc.

4. *African Times* (London) 30.12.72.

5. *Independent* (Freetown) 14.9.76.

6. *West African Reporter* (Freetown) 7.1.80.

7. *Sierra Leone Weekly News* (Freetown) 9.10.97.

8. *ib.* 22.5.26.

His life-story is only indirectly a contribution to the history of Nigeria. Save for his early years and his short-lived venture into the oil trade of Old Calabar he spent his life elsewhere. But he exemplifies the many Sierra Leone recaptives of Nigerian origin whose initiative and self-reliance in their new home turned them into an African bourgeoisie, without which the subsequent political development of West Africa would have been impossible.

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## THE ORIGINS OF SAPELE TOWNSHIP

by

ADOGBEJI SALUBI

S A P E L E which is today one of the most important industrial port towns in the Western Region of Nigeria was a small village belonging to the people of Okpe in Urhobo country. Sapele, Sapoli, and Sapeli, are the European rendering of the Okpe name of the village which is *Urhiapele* or *Urhuaapele*. The hinterland Urhobo call it *Isapele* and the Itsekiri people generally call it *Usapele*, both obviously after the European rendering. *Urhiapele* or *Urhuaapele* is a combination of two Urhobo words—*Urhie* or *Urho* and *Apele*. *Urhie* or *Urho* means a river or a stream, and *Apele* is a name of a Juju of the Okpe owners of the village. *Urhiapele* or *Urhuaapele* therefore means the “River or the stream of Apele”.

Among the Edo-speaking peoples of South-Western Nigeria, there are two groups of people both of whom bear the name *Okpe*. The first is the Okpe (Urhobo) people of the Delta Province, and the second is a small group in the north of Benin Province. Hubbard has already dealt with the origins of those in the first group while Bradbury dealt with those in the second group.<sup>1</sup> So far, no affinity between the two Okpe groups has been identified.

At a point somewhere about 60 miles from the sea coast, the Benin River<sup>2</sup> divides itself into two branches. In 1839, Mr. Robert Jamieson of Glasgow, who had considerable trading interests in the Oil Rivers, named the northern branch of the river after himself. In April, 1840, during his exploration of the Benin River, Mr. John Beecroft named the southern branch *Ethiope* after the name of the 30 horse-power craft used for the voyage. The craft belonged to

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1. J. W. Hubbard—*The Sobo of the Niger Delta*, pp.107, 236-241.

and

R. E. Bradbury—*The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria* pp.110 and 117.

2. The River was so named because it was only through it that Benin City could be reached in the old days.

Joao Alfonso, a Portuguese and the first European to discover Benin, named the river *Rio Famoso*—the “beautiful river”. The English, French, Dutch and other northern Europeans called it Benin or *Argon* river. *A Description of the Coasts of South-Guinea* :—John Barbot Book IV, Chap. V., p.355. *Churchill Collection of Voyages and Travels* Vol.5 B.M. 566 K.10.

Mr. Robert Jamieson, his employer.<sup>1</sup> It is on the left bank of the Ethiope River that Sapele is situated.

The juju "Urhuafele", according to tradition, was said to have belonged to a single family at Orerokpe.<sup>2</sup> It has also been said that it was Onoje, a member of that family and a son of Orhue, who brought the juju from Orerokpe to Sapele. Onoje was one of the founders of Sapele. At Sapele the juju became a communal juju for the whole people of Sapele. After Onoje, his son Basude became the priest. Basude was succeeded by Amune Aparo. When the latter became a Christian, he was replaced by Uboro. The original sacrificial place for the juju was at the waterside near the site formerly occupied by the Messrs Miller Brothers<sup>3</sup> but now occupied by the Stores of the United Africa Company. It is only a short distance from the Sapele Ferry Landing. The juju still exists but the sacrificial place has been shifted. A small house built for it by its worshippers can be seen in Sapele Urban area near Laborde Street.

The homestead of the Okpe people is Orerokpe. Tradition has it that owing to the autocratic attitude of the Orodje,<sup>4</sup> the people revolted and killed him. After that incident, the people abandoned Orerokpe and settled in groups in different parts of what is known today as Okpe land in Urhobo country. From among those groups of settlers came people like Ijigare, Onoje, Onokuta and Omighodua who were said to be among the founders of Sapele. There is no one alive today who has any idea as to when the revolt at Orerokpe occurred; nor can anyone tell when the subsequent founding of Sapele village took place.<sup>5</sup>

1. A. F. Mockler—Ferryman—*British West Africa* (1898) p.288  
and also  
Capt. H. L. Gallwey—Journals in the Benin Country, West Africa. *J.R.G.S.* Vol.1, 1893, pp.122-130.
2. *Orerokpe* is a combination of two Urhobo words—*Orere* and *Okpe* meaning "Capital town of Okpe".
3. Evidence of Chief A. E. Oarin and others in the Sapele Land Case No. W/37/1941. Chief Oarin was educated and one of the leading Okpe Chiefs of his own time. Died 12.3.1949.
4. *Orodje* is the Okpe rendering of *Ovie*. The Orodje is the titular head of the Okpe people. The office was defunct for many years. The present *Orodje* of Okpe, His Highness Ezezi II, O.B.E., M.H.C., J.P. was installed on 1.1.1945 on resuscitation of the Office.
5. Giving evidence before Mr. Alexander, Commissioner of Lands, on the 9th November, 1911, Chief Iyefian, one of the Sapele Okpe Chiefs, claimed that their fathers who were farmers had always been at Sapele. He described how the boundaries of the land were demarcated and divided, according to Urhobo custom, into compounds each occupied by a family. See Memorandum on the subject of Native Land Tenure in the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. (C.O.L.) *Nigeria Pamphlet* No. 36, Vol. 1 pp. 20-21.  
Chief Iyefian's evidence was supported in later years by Chief Ayomano, Chief Oarin, Itoto Ogo and Amune Aparo in the famous Sapele Land Case; but not one of them gave any direct indication as to when Sapele was founded.

## Early European Influence

For how long the Okpe people of Sapele lived on the land before its contact with outside influence, especially by way of trade, no one can surmise. The Portuguese who were the first European power to have influence in the Bight of Benin made contacts with the Kingdoms of Benin and Warri from the middle of the 15th century. From that period, a considerable amount of trade in slaves, pepper, palm oil, ivory, etc., began with Portugal, Holland, England and other European countries. Some of the market towns on the mouth of Benin River, or in the creeks leading to the River included Arebo or Arbon, Gotton,<sup>1</sup> Boededoe<sup>2</sup> and Meiborg. Dr. Talbot thought that Arebo<sup>3</sup> or Arbon might be Sapele but Sir Richard Burton suggested that Arebo or Arbon was Arogbo. From the description of the proximity of the town to the other market towns in the area, and also of the water-plants of the creek, I am inclined to agree with Burton that Arebo or Arbon was Arogbo, not Sapele. Captain Gallwey was of the opinion that the Portuguese, in their trade in the Benin River district, "must have confined their labours to the Benin country proper, as there was nothing to show that the white man had ever before been in the Sobo country".<sup>4</sup> The Urhobo people were not directly concerned with the European slave-trade. For the little part they played, the Itsekiri and the Ijo people acted as middle-men.

It is a matter for conjecture whether Sapele village existed at the time of the European slave-trade. What seems to be true is that, if it existed, the slave trade activities on the Benin River by Europeans did not extend to Sapele. There has been, so far, no such evidence. There is evidence, however, that from the time of what came to be known as "the legitimate trade," Sapele, the first Urhobo market to be reached from the sea coast, had contacts with Ijo and Itsekiri traders. These traders acted as middle-men between European supercargoes and merchants on the coast and Urhobo people who are agriculturists and producers of raw materials from the hinterland.

At this distant time, no one can venture to guess when the trade at Sapele started. But Chief A. E. Omarin seemed to have shed a ray of light on the remoteness of the time in his historic letter of 1912<sup>5</sup> to

1. This is *Ughoton*. Its other names by the Portuguese are *Hugato* or *Agatton*. John Barbot, *Ibid*. It was also called *Gwato* or *Gato*. Ughoton was the old port town to Benin City known to Europeans. It is about 25 miles to the City.
2. Boededoe was identified to be the Itsekiri town of Bobi on the left bank of the mouth of Benin River. See *Selected Papers on Anthropology, Travel and Geography* by Sir Richard Burton edited by N. M. Penzer, author of annotated Bibliography of Sir Richard Burton, etc., London, (1924) p.229.
3. P. A. Talbot *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. 1, p.325.
4. H. L. Gallwey—Report on Visit to the Sobo and Abraka markets: F. O. 84/2111, pp.473-482.
5. This letter is historic having been tendered as an exhibit in the Sapele Land Case No.W/37/1941.

Chief Dore Numa. Chief Omarin stated in the letter that when Ijeghare<sup>1</sup> and his people were at Sapele, the 'Ijo' or 'Ujon' people were often troubling him. Ijeghare therefore sent to the Olu to give him one of his Captains to trade with him. That the "Olu" sent to him at Sapele a man called *Ibakpododo*, that after *Ibakpododo* died, Princess "Idolu"<sup>2</sup> sent "Amakatse". That after Amakatse's death, she sent one Ofokunije.

The significance of this information is the close connection of the action said to have been taken by the Olu and Princess Idolu. If the story is true, then that Olu must be Akengbuwa who died on June 14, 1848. It is a fact in Itsekiri history that Princess Idolu took charge of the affairs of the Itsekiri country after Akengbuwa's death. There was no Olu, after Akengbuwa until 1936, when Genuwa II was installed.

The inference to be drawn from Ijeghare's contact with the Olu is that trading in Sapele must have been earlier, probably very much earlier, than 1848. From this point, one may be tempted to hazard a conjecture, albeit reasonable, that the palm-oil trade which began at about the close of the eighteenth century probably stimulated the founding of Sapele—a waterside village—to facilitate the trade. This is however a big guess and if one is to go by it, the conclusion may be drawn that Sapele village might have been founded either in the late eighteenth century or in early nineteenth century.

In the first half of the 19th century, however, Europeans paid occasional visits to Sapele. Dr. William F. Daniell visited the area in 1839, and, in April, 1840, Mr. John Beecroft explored the Benin river and its two branches including of course Sapele.

### *Establishment of British Government at Sapele*

In August, 1891, the British Government established a Consular Administration over the Oil Rivers Protectorate, later, the Niger Coast Protectorate. The administration, consisting of six consular river districts, was under Major (later Sir) Claude M. Macdonald. He was the Commissioner and Consul-General and his headquarters was at Calabar. Two of the six river districts were located at Benin River and Forcados River. Shortly after its establishment, the Forcados River District was removed to Warri trading station which is now the Warri Township. It is with the Benin River District that we are concerned in this paper. The first Deputy Commissioner and

1. Very likely to be the same person as Ijigare named at page 3 as one of the founders of Sapele.
2. Princess "Idolu" was an influential Itsekiri woman. She was a daughter of Olu Erejuwa. Her full name was *Udrolusan* but she was popularly called *Iye*.

Europeans of the time referred to her as "Princess Dola or Dolla". Letter dated 1.3.1849, from Commander John Tudor of *H.M.S. Firefly* off the Benin reporting the disturbed situation of affairs in the river to his Chief Commander A. Fanshawe of Constance at Ascension.

Vice-Consul in charge of the Benin River District was Captain H. L. Gallwey.<sup>1</sup> The District Office was at the mouth of Benin River, 5 miles from the sea coast. The jurisdiction of the Vice-Consul covered the whole of the Benin country and included the south-western part of the Itsekiri country and the north-western part of the Urhobo country particularly along the Ethiope river.

About two months after the establishment of the Protectorate Government, Gallwey was given an important duty to carry out. The new Government was anxious to open up the country. For many years, the powerful Chiefs of the sea coast had prevented Europeans from penetrating into the hinterland. The two powerful Africans in the Benin District who were in the way of the Government were Chief Nana<sup>2</sup> of Ebrohimi and the Oba of Benin. It was the Government's view that unless both of them changed their attitude, there would be no peace, good government and expanded trade in the area. The Government would therefore be obliged to take strong measures against them if they did not change. In any case, the new Government needed a force. In order to be assured of an adequate and effective force readily available to sustain the authority of the Consular Officers, it was necessary to have some constabulary posts at suitable points in the new Protectorate. Therefore one of the first assignments to Gallwey was the survey in October, 1891, of the Urhobo oil-markets along the Ethiope River.

The objects of Gallwey's survey were however many, namely, to endeavour to establish the authority of the new Government, to select suitable sites for Vice-Consulates, barracks and constabulary posts, to impress upon the people the great advantages to be gained by the cultivation of such crops as coffee, cocoa, etc., and, to inquire into the general slackness of trade in that part of the Urhobo country.

1. Gallwey, Lieut.—Col. Sir Henry Lionel; K.C.M.G., created 1910 (C.M.G. 1899); D.S.O. 1896; born 25 September, 1859; (assumed the surname Gallway in place of Gallwey 1911); A.D.C. and Private Secretary to Commander-in-Chief and Governor, Bermuda, 1882-89; Deputy Commissioner and Vice-Consul, Oil Rivers Protectorate, 1891; concluded treaty with King of Benin at Benin City, 1892; in command of Hausa force, under Sir Frederick Bedford, at attack on and capture of Nimbe, and during further operations against Brass Chiefs, 1895; Acting Consul-General, Niger Coast Protectorate, 1896-98, and, was during that period attached to Sir H. Rawson's intelligence staff, and also in command of a Hausa company for operations in Benin country, including capture of Benin City, 1897; Acting High Commissioner, Southern Nigeria, 1900; Chief Political Officer Aro Expedition, 1901-1902; Governor of St. Helena, 1902-11; of the Gambia, 1911-14; of South Australia, 1914-20; Hon. Col., 27th Australian Infantry, 1921-46; died 17.6.1949.  
*Who Was Who, 1941-1950.*
2. Chief Nana was a powerful Itsekiri Chief. His full name was *Eriomala*. His father was Olomu and the mother an Urhobo woman from Evhro (Effuru). Made "Governor of Benin River". 6.5.1885, captured and kept in exile at Calabar December, 1894; deported to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) August, 1896; released from exile and resettled at Koko 1906; died 3.7.1916.

On October 27, 1891, accompanied by Mr. S. Munro of the African Association, Gallwey proceeded on the voyage for the survey in a launch hired from Messrs Bey and Zimmer, a German trading firm at Benin River. The following part of his report is pertinent:

*"General account of the Visit in diary form*

"October 27: Left Consulate at 10 a.m. reached Sapele 6 p.m. anchored for the night—roughly 55 miles from Consulate and 60 miles from the mouth of the river.

"The anchorage here is deep and roomy, and the ground high, though one mass of forest. A most suitable spot to establish factories especially as all the produce from the Sobo markets passes here on the way to the towns near the mouth of the river.

"I consider Sapele to be a very good place to establish a Vice-Consulate, constabulary barracks, etc.

"A great deal of clearing would be necessary to prepare the site, but this would afford work to the natives, and consequently be beneficial to some one.

"By means of a launch all the markets could be reached in a very short time; a launch drawing 6 feet of water could go about 3 miles past Eku.

"The river water at Sapele is fresh, and one is well clear of the mangrove and fever swamps of the coast.

"Steamers drawing 14 to 15 feet of water could run up to Sapele.

"These steamers could tranship cargo to and from the larger steamers in the Forcados River".

"October 28: Up anchor at 6 a.m. Half a mile after leaving Sapele I left the main stream and went almost due east up a side creek (or river?). Sapele is the first Sobo market, and from there each bank is dotted at intervals with the oil markets, the few houses on the river-side being a sort of depot where the middlemen live and buy oil as it is brought from inland by the Sobo men. Reached Acpara<sup>1</sup> at 4. 30 p.m."<sup>2</sup>

Major Claude Maxwell Macdonald, the Commissioner and Consul-General visited Sapele on the 14th November, 1891, and approved the site as being eminently suitable. In his Despatch No. 30 to the Foreign Office, dated 12th December, 1891, the Major said "I consider the Sapoli would be a very good situation for the establishment of a constabulary station; the ground is high, and though covered with forest, could be easily cleared. The people of Sapoli informed me that if I would come and build there, they would clear as much ground as I wished". That was the historic decision that made Sapele village the modern Township it came to be in later years.<sup>3</sup>

1. Acpara refers to Okpara Waterside.
2. H. L. Gallwey—Report on Visit to the Sobo and Abraka markets op. cit.
3. As the founder of Sapele Township, the Sapele Urban District Council will do well to honour Gallwey's memory by naming at least a street or a square in the town after him.



*His Excellency Colonel Galway, C.M.G., D.S.O.*



*The Vice Consulate on the Benin River*



*A Temporary House at Sapele*



The Government did not however wait for the work on the site of the proposed Sapele constabulary station to be completed before establishing there. The matter was urgent and a temporary device had to be made. A ship named the "Hindustan"<sup>1</sup> bought at Bristol was sailed to Benin River. There it was dismantled, fitted up as a hulk, and towed to the Sapele anchorage. The hulk was said to have provided excellent accommodation for four Europeans, a Customs Office, a Consular Court, a Treasury, a Prison and Barracks for civil police.

While the machinery of Government began in the hulk, the excellent site opposite the anchorage was being cleared for the construction of barracks to accommodate sixty men and a detachment of Protectorate troops under an English Officer. That was in 1892. To live and work in a hulk might be an innovation at Sapele,<sup>2</sup> but the idea was certainly not a new one to Europeans, especially European traders in the Oil Rivers.<sup>3</sup> By its strategic location, Sapele, like Degema, was considered to be an important military and administrative station for the projection of power and authority.

Details about the settlement of the Government at Sapele for the next two years are yet unknown and must await further research. It is known however that by July, 1894, a Medical Department had been established. It is also known that by 1895, the Sapele Vice-Consulate had already been sufficiently established as to warrant the closing down of the Vice-Consulate at Benin River. Thereafter, the Benin River Office was used as a Customs post until October 27, 1905, when the post was removed to Koko Town.

### *Sapele Township*

Under the provisions of the European Reservation Proclamation, 1902, a part of Sapele became a Reservation.<sup>4</sup> Later, a Board<sup>5</sup> of Health for the Reservation was constituted. The President and Treasurer of the Board was Hugh Jones, Esq., Agent, Messrs Alex Miller Brothers & Company.<sup>6</sup> The significant point to be noted here is that the institution of the Board laid the first foundations of the present local government of Sapele township.

1. The "Hindustan" cost £1,800; a further £1,800 was spent to adapt it for the Government's purpose. F. O. 84/2194, pp.330-331.
2. When Degema district was being established in 1894, a hulk "George Shotton" was used for exactly the same purpose as the "Hindustan".
3. Ellen Thorpe gave an interesting description of this mode of living by Oil Rivers traders in her book—*Ladder of Bones* pp. 170-203.
4. Order No. 6 of 29.1.1903, *Southern Nigeria Protectorate Government Gazette* No. 1, Vol.4, of 31.1.1903, p.LXXII.
5. The Board was proclaimed on 3.2.03.
6. Other members were J. E. Dickson, Esq., Agent African Association Ltd., J. Frisch, Esq., Agent Bey and Zimmer, the District Commissioner and the District Medical Officer. p.12 of Gazette quoted immediately above.

A major change in the local government set-up took place in 1917, by the enactment of the Townships Ordinance. Under this Ordinance, Order-in-Council No. 19 of 6th September, 1917, made Sapele a Second Class Township. The Senior District Officer became the Local Authority assisted by an Advisory Board. The two members of the Board were the Health Officer, and the Chairman of the agents of the trading firms.<sup>1</sup> In September, 1924, Chief A. E. Omarin and Mr J. A. Thomas were appointed to the Board. They were probably the first Africans to be so appointed. In later years however, African representation on the Board was increased, but the Township was governed almost entirely alone by the Local Authority who was always a Civil Servant for 38 years.

A new local government system was introduced in September, 1955, by the establishment of the Sapele Urban District Council under the Western Region Local Government Law, 1952.<sup>2</sup> The Council consisted of 33 members, namely, the President, who was the Orodje of Okpe, 8 Sapele Okpe traditional Chiefs and 24 members elected from the local community.

From the above account, it is clear that unlike many towns in the Western Region, but like the present Warri town, Sapele is a new town.<sup>3</sup> Both places came into prominence as from August, 1891, when the Niger Coast Protectorate Government was established. Sapele has always been a rapidly growing town but its present size is not known. In December, 1908, the Government leased for 99 years, 510 acres of the land from the owners. This leased area has not only been developed since to become the present Sapele township, but a considerably large Urban Area has grown alongside it on the south-west and on the north-western side.

Sapele town has always needed some sort of planning. Before the establishment of the Protectorate Government, the original Sapele village was at the site where the Prison Yard and the Government houses are now; the small market was at the old garage site at Court Road. The Sapele village had two quarters known as Udumurhie and Udumuogo.<sup>4</sup> Udumurhie included the area where the District Officer and the Medical Officer's houses were built at the waterside, and Udumuogo was the Prison Yard area. The original village was vacated for the Government and the Okpe aborigines moved farther out. Chief Ofotoku was living on the site where the present market is, and Chief Ogodo's village was in the area now occupied by the staff

1. Government Gazette Notice No. 7, p.13 of the *Nigeria Gazette* No. 3. of 10.1.18.
2. *W.R.L.N.* 220 of 1955, pp. B.617-620, Supplement to the *Western Regional Gazette* No. 34, Vol.4 of 21.7.1955.
3. Among other towns in Nigeria which like Sapele and Warri owe their origin to the British administration mention may be made of Port Harcourt, Enugu, Aba and the Capital Territory of Kaduna.
4. *Udumurhie* means "Riverside quarter" and *Udumuogo* means "Farmland quarter".

buildings of the African Timber and Plywood, Limited. McIver acquired the lease of the site and Chief Ogodo moved farther down to the Warri road where his village still stands today.

These movements of the aborigines were uncontrolled and the areas occupied unplanned. As they began to sell or give the land around them to strangers, a large unplanned urban area with all types of houses began to grow. And something must be done to the layout of the town. Mr Palmer<sup>1</sup> tells us that we had Mr. Laborde, District Officer, who laid out the town, to thank for the good streets. But it has been a long time from Laborde's days, and the slum in Sapele continues to grow.

Thus in January, 1949, the first Town Planning Authority was appointed. The appointment was long overdue for many years having regard to the rapid and indiscriminate way in which the urban area was developing. Everybody built just what and how he liked without control from the health authorities. On the Town Planning Authority were representatives of the Administration, the Health Department, the Township Board being represented by two of its members. Three members represented Okpe interests, and one member from the Amalgamated Union of U.A.C. African Workers, Nigeria and Cameroons, represented the interest of workers in Sapele. For the next two years, Chief Arthur Prest and Chief Festus S. Okotie-Eboh (then Chief F. S. Edah) represented the Township Board, while Messrs Rabor Abeke, E. A. Iyefian and J. A. Ayomanor represented Okpe interests.

Within the last ten years, the Sapele Town Planning Authority has been enlarged both in membership<sup>2</sup> and organisation. It has now a big separate office of its own. It is at present projecting a new development scheme by which the area of the Township is to be extended to include all the parcel of land south of Sapele Urban Boundary and along both sides of Sapele—Warri road. This new acquisition contains an area of approximately 1,840 acres (2.88 square miles).<sup>3</sup>

Following the enactment of the Communal Land Rights (Vesting in Trustees) Law No. 45 of 1958, a most significant change in the management of Sapele Township land occurred. Under this law, the Sapele Urban District (Okpe Communal Lands) have been vested in a board of Trustees known as the Okpe Communal Land Trustees. The

1. Mr. I. T. Palmer, a Yoruba, was for many years a Political Agent of the Royal Niger Company. He was popularly known as Ogana among the people of the Afenmai and Asaba Divisions among whom he exercised his jurisdiction. On retirement in 1898, he settled at Sapele in the following year as a businessman. He was the first person ever to be nominated as an unofficial member for Warri—Benin Provinces to the Legislative Council of Nigeria (1928-1934). Died at Sapele on 26.10.42.
2. For the present members of the Authority, see Western Regional Notice No.1329, p.728 of *Western Region of Nigeria Gazette* No. 57, Vol. 8 of 10.12.59.
3. *W.R.L.N.* 462 of 11.9.59, pp.B597/8 of Supplement to the *Western Regional Gazette* No. 43, Vol.8 of 17.9. 59.

Orodje of Okpe is the Chairman and the other members of the trust are 10 other Sapele Okpe Chiefs. The main functions of the trustees are to demise land for a term of years, to accept surrenders of leases and to be reversioners of any lease so granted. All revenue received in consequence of the exercise of the board's functions are to be applied or disposed of (a) in defraying the expenses of the trustees in carrying into effect their duties (including the management of any lands over which rights of disposition are exerciseable and the conduct of legal proceedings in connection with which rights have been vested) and (b) in advancing the education or culture or maintaining the tradition of the Okpe Community. To ensure that the revenue received by the trustees is applied or disposed of in the manner specified above, an Okpe Lands Representative Committee has been established.<sup>1</sup> Under this arrangement, the Government of the Western Region which succeeded to the titles and rights of the former Nigerian government appears to have very little or nothing practically to do with the management of Sapele land.

Sapele Township has for a long time now become a populous town of mixed Nigerian tribes and other people from different parts of West Africa. A significant fact about the population of Sapele is that it has always included a large number of Europeans for a town of that size. Some of the historical factors responsible for the growth and the cosmopolitan character of the population may be described. Firstly, the transfer of the vice-consular office from Benin River, followed by the removal of the European trading firms at Benin River to Sapele, brought in its wake most of the mixed trading population which had settled in Benin River for many years. Secondly, when in 1894, Chief Nana was captured by the Protectorate Government, the concentrated population of Ebrohimi, was disbanded and many of them re-settled at Sapele. A great many of them were Chief Nana's domestics and among them were Yorubas, Ijos, Urhobo, Benins, etc. Thirdly, and this is perhaps by far the most important, the employment opportunities offered by the Sapele rubber plantations and the U.A.C. Sawmill and Plywood factories attracted a large body of people seeking gainful employment. Most people in this third category are Ibos; this factor accounts mainly for the large number of Ibo settlers in Sapele and its environs.

The African population of Sapele Township in 1952, was 33,638.<sup>2</sup>

1. *W.R.L.N.* 219 of 11.6.59, p.B303 of Supplement to *Western Regional Gazette* No. 27 of 11.6.59.
2. Bulletin No.9 Delta Province: Population Census, Western Region of Nigeria, 1952, p.28.

This is comprised of some 14 tribes with the Ibos leading at 35.6% or more than a third of the total population. The figures in a descending order of magnitude are:-

IBO	11,974	ISOKO	831	TIV	37
URHOB	7,657	IJAW	685	FULANI	20
ITSEKIRI	4,825	HAUSA	615	OTHER NIGERIAN	
EDO	3,335	IBIBIO	333	TRIBES	646
YORUBA	2,428	NUPE	78	NON-NIGERIANS	174

### *The Problems of Administration*

The Government's reason for moving from Benin River to Sapele and from the Forcados River to Warri trading settlement was to have bases on land to facilitate penetration into the hinterland. These places, like many others in the Protectorate, were to be centres of a civilizing power. The officers of the Government must therefore have a sense of mission. Gallwey knew too well what he wanted to make of Sapele. He said in May, 1892, that before another year had passed he would "have founded a prosperous little English Colony at Sapele". But how was this possible!

Before Sapele, which had already been described as "one mass of forest", could become a "prosperous little English Colony", a lot must have to be done. There were therefore the problems of roads and other means of communication, the problems of sanitation and health, of administration of justice, of education and of economic development to make possible the realisation of the prosperity desired for the little English Colony. But economic prosperity was impossible without adequate and effective communications with the interior of the Urhobo and the Benin country. Before the station was founded, the only sure access to it known to the Europeans was through water communication. There were, of course, bush foot-paths from village to village, but known only to the natives.

Each of these problems was by no means easy and none second to the other in order of priority; but somehow construction of roads seemed to take precedence. Although nothing was done immediately, Gallwey suggested as early as July, 1892, that a road be constructed between Sapele and Urhobo (Sobo) Oil markets at Ekanaka and Okpara waterside to be followed later by a railway.<sup>1</sup>

The first bold attempt with the primary purpose of opening a direct road communication between Warri and Sapele was made on January 6, 1896. Accompanied by five orderlies, twenty-eight carriers and a guide, Major P.W.G. Copland-Crawford, then Acting Consul, Warri Division, marched through a number of bush paths from Warri Consulate to Sapele. That was the first time ever that any European

1. H. L. Gallwey—Report on Benin District for the year ended 31.7.1892, F.O.2/51 p.54.

had undertaken a journey overland between the two towns. The journey took two days and was regarded as an important new discovery. The Foreign Office forwarded Major Copland-Crawford's report together with the map of the route to the Royal Geographical Society, London, who printed it in its Journal.

However, the period of active road-construction did not begin until 1903 when the provisions of the Roads and Creeks proclamation were applied to the area. From Sapele, two roads were projected. They were the Sapele-Warri road and the Sapele-Ologbo road. The latter was a first sector of the road from Sapele to Benin City. At Amuokpe, which is 4 miles on the Sapele-Warri road, a branch road to tap the oil markets in the Urhobo and Ukwuani countries was to shoot off.

The Public Works Department took over supervision of the construction of these roads in 1904, when the Department was established. By this time, the portion of the road assigned to Egbeku village on the Sapele-Warri road had not been completed. Mr. Ross-Brown, the District Commissioner, imposed a heavy fine on the Chief. As regards the other portions, it was reported that work from Sapele end was completed up to Amuokpe, and that the trace via the new cutting to Adeje was being rapidly cleared.

In 1906, the 33 miles of the Sapele-Warri road was completed at a cost of £840, and the 11 miles of the Sapele-Ologbo road was also completed at a cost of £500. The cutting of the Ologbo-Benin City sector was about to be started and the Amuokpe-Kwale road was just being cut. Mr. C. Darby, superintendent of Roads, tells us that the construction of the portion between Amuokpe and Ovwori was started in late 1907. For the making of all these roads, labour was compulsory and, to a large extent, free. Free labour recruited by local chiefs was however given occasional presents. No other road from Sapele had been constructed since 1910, when the last of the three main roads named above, was known to have been completed.<sup>1</sup> In 1911, it was possible to motor in a light car on the triangular route of Warri-Sapele-Kwale which were the first motor roads in Urhobo country.

The Protectorate Government had in mind the construction of railway lines to link Sapele with Abraka, and Sapele with Benin City. In the latter case, definite proposals were put forward and a report of the scheme was submitted in 1906. The estimates were £79,000 for a 2 feet 6 inches line, and £105,000 for a 3 feet 6 inches line. But the scheme did not materialise. Following the amalgamation of the Protectorate with Lagos, Sir Walter Egerton, then Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Lagos Colony and the Protectorate of

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1. It is not known when the Sapoba-Agbor road which branched off from the Sapele-Ologbo road at mile 4 was made, but it is believed to be later than 1910.

Southern Nigeria, advised the Secretary of State against it. He condemned the proposed railway line as unballasted. Rather than constructing a railway at what he considered to be a heavy cost for a distance of only 29 miles, he recommended making at a lower cost a good metalled road all the way from Warri to Benin City.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to observe here that this same road was, in fact, not completely tarred until 1952—46 years later!

From the beginning of the Protectorate Government, the Vice-Consul in charge of each River District was a Postal Agent. Gallwey was, therefore, the first Postal Agent for the Benin River-Sapele area. In the Annual Report for 1896, the Government reported the opening of three Post Offices each at Sapele, Forcados and Degema, thus bringing the number of such offices in the whole Protectorate to nine. The service was mainly a postal service by canoe. An inland weekly mail service between Sapele and Kwale station (now Abraka) through mail runners using canoe was started in 1906.

On the 1st April, 1907, a Postal Agency by non-Government staff, probably, the first in the area, was opened on the premises of the Messrs Alexander Miller Brothers at Siluko. It was a link of the weekly creek mail service between Lagos and Sapele. In 1909, the service was extended to Okitipupa and Gbekebo.

Captain Moir, R.E., D.S.O., and five non-Commissioned Officers of the Telegraph Battalion, R.E., who arrived in the Protectorate in February, 1905, completed the erection of an overhead telegraph line connecting Warri, Sapele, Benin City, Ifon and Owo in December of that year; but the service was not officially opened until March 8, 1906. In 1908, a telephone system was opened at Warri.

The Sapele Ferry which is till today the only means of carrying motor vehicles across the river was started in January, 1929.

### *Education*

The first attempt to establish a Mission and a School in the Benin River area was in 1875, 16 years before the administration of the Niger Coast Protectorate began. Bishop Samuel Adjai Crowther, accompanied by Mr. S. Cheetham, Mr. D. Johnson of Pinnock, and his son (later Archdeacon Crowther), visited Olomu at Ebrohimi on November 4, 1875. Nana was one of the two of Olomu's sons present at the interview. He acted as an Interpreter as he understood English pretty well. Olomu did not welcome the Bishop's mission, and so to the disappointment of many people, including European traders of the river, the mission failed.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Government Notice No. 350, p.471 of *Southern Nigeria Government Gazette* No. 23, Vol.1, of 12.9.1906, also p.864 of *Gazette* No. 42 of 26.12.1906.
  2. Archdeacon D. C. Crowther. *The Niger Delta Pastorate Church West Africa, its Establishment during the Episcopacy of the Rt. Rev. S. A. Crowther*, D.D. 1864-1892. pp. 119-125.

A second unsuccessful attempt for the same purpose was made by Captain Gallwey in August, 1891. In his letter, dated August 28, 1891, six days after opening the Benin Vice-Consulate, Gallwey requested Archdeacon Crowther to establish a Mission at Benin River. In his reply dated October 8, 1891, the Archdeacon told Captain Gallwey that he would establish only if the Chiefs unanimously agreed and invited his Mission with a promise to support the cause. The support would be in the form of voluntary subscriptions, gratuitously giving the ground on which to build the station, helping to erect the houses for the Missionary agents, and of finding half the share of the annual expenses until the station could stand on its own. The Archdeacon sent the record of the 1875 visit to Gallwey and requested him to ascertain the feelings of the Chiefs who, he said, could not be regarded as "poor Africans".

Bishop Crowther died about three months after this correspondence. Matters connected with the death naturally occupied the Archdeacon's time, and in the meantime, Gallwey was busy establishing at Sapele. However, Gallwey wrote to the Archdeacon on 3rd May, 1892, and indicated that he would welcome a Mission as he was opening a Vice-Consulate at Sapele where the ground was high and well away from the fever swamps of the coast. Clearing, he added, was at that time being made and before another year had passed, he would "have founded a prosperous little English Colony at Sapele". Continuing, he said that two traders had established there and more were to follow. They would all be glad to assist in helping the Mission to build and to contribute towards the erection of a small church. Workshops would be built and suitable instructors imported<sup>1</sup>. Gallwey's strong persuasions did not, however, move Archdeacon Crowther, and there the matter rested.

When the Ogugumanga Industrial Institute, Bonny, was founded in April, 1900, each of the local Chiefs was requested by Government to bring a son for primary education. Response to the request was reluctantly given, some Chiefs sending young slaves instead of their sons.

On February 26, 1904, Government opened an Intermediate School at Sapele, but on the Sapele-Benin road, with 14 boys on the roll. The late Chief A. E. Omarin and the late Mr. William Moore, the Itsekiri Historian, were students of that School. The school was temporarily housed in a native building as the brick building was not ready owing to a delay by the Public Works Department at Calabar. Later in the same year, a girls' section was added. Supported by the Chiefs and European traders, the school was also grant-aided by Government.

For many reasons, the school was not popular and attendance not encouraging. The Benin River Chiefs considered the distance too

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1. *IBID.* p.128.

great for their children. The Sapele Chiefs felt the school was on the wrong side of the river as crossing the river involved risks of life. But these were not all. At a Council meeting with the Chiefs, Mr. W. Ross Brown the District Commissioner, was told that more pupils were not sent because the fees were considered excessive. The Chiefs however appeared to be satisfied when told that the annual fee would be reduced to £2 if the pupils supplied their own food. Owing, however, to the continued unpopularity of the school, Government was obliged to open in 1907, a new School in Sapele town itself. That was the beginning of the Government School, now Sapele Urban District Council School. The cost was £52 defrayed entirely from contributions by the Chiefs. It operated in two sections each separate for boys and girls.

By 1908, Bishop Johnson of the Church Missionary Society, through the assistance of Mr. I. T. Palmer, had established the first church and missionary school, the St. Luke's at Sapele. The school was not at first assisted by Government because it was not prepared to comply with the requirements of the Education Code, particularly in regard to religious instructions. The line of missionary educational work was soon followed by the Baptist Mission, headed by the Rev. J. R. Williams and Rev. Omatsola, and, the Roman Catholic Mission. Since then, missionaries of other denominations have established in Sapele at various times.

It is rather surprising that although attention was given to the education of females as early as 1904, no Colleges catering exclusively for girls' secondary education have been established in Sapele. To the credit of the authorities of the Roman Catholic Mission it must be said that the only two missionary boys' colleges in the area were introduced by them. There are, of course, some colleges in the form of commercial institutions owned by some private individuals like Chief Festus Sam. Okotie-Eboh. But generally speaking, these colleges are by no means adequate. On the whole, progress in secondary education in the area has been very slow, resulting in the backwardness of many of the people.

Mr. T. A. Salubi is Commissioner for Labour, Lagos.

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## THE MAJOR CURRENCIES IN NIGERIAN HISTORY

by

A. H. M. KIRK-GREENE

THE minting of our own Nigerian currency during what has been called "Nigeria's year of destiny" suggests that an historical review of the major media of fiscal exchange would lend itself neatly to an issue of the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* specially designed to mark the country's achievement of independence. If, as the adage asserts, communications are civilisation, then to no less a degree is the unhampered circulation of currency the *sine qua non* of a modern state's economic weal.

"In general", declares Dr. Ida Greaves in the introduction to her valuable contribution to the Colonial Research Studies series,<sup>1</sup>

"writers about the colonies have omitted the subject of money, and writers about money have ignored the colonies. And this almost unbroken silence of more than half a century is itself remarkable, as it covered a period when problems of money and of colonies separately had an eminent place in public discussion and primitive currencies were receiving extensive attention in antiquarian and anthropological studies".

For the relevance of this accusation in the African context, evidence is to hand in the woefully scant entries under CURRENCY (two references in the eighteen hundred odd pages) and MONEY (nil) in the index to the standard and authoritative work of reference on modern Africa, Lord Hailey's *An African Survey*. Nigeria is no exception in this record of neglect; and it is to offer a preliminary historical survey of our country's monetary development as well as an independence tribute that this essay has been written.<sup>2</sup>

Although an economist could write a whole thesis in defence of his failure to agree on the definition of money—a thesis which, given the perverse nature of the expert, might vexingly conclude that there was no such thing as money—we nevertheless require some basis for

1. *Colonial Monetary Conditions*, Ida Greaves, 1953.

2. Among the general works not cited elsewhere in the text, reference should be made to *Primitive Trade*, E. Hoyt, 1924; "On the Origin of Money", K. Menger, *Economic Journal*, 1892; *The Silent Trade*, P. J. Hamilton Grierson, 1903; *Economics in Primitive Communities*, R. Thurnwald 1932; *Elements of Social Organisation*, R. Firth; *Primitive Money*, H. A. Wieschoff, special issue of Pennsylvania University Museum Bulletin, December 1945; *History of Money in the British Empire and United States*, A. F. Dodd, 1911; and *A History of Currency in the British Colonies*, Lord Chalmers, 1893.

discussion. From a lecturer at the Anthropological Institute at the end of the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup> we may accept for our purpose this definition:

Barter is the exchange of one article for another; currency implies exchange through a medium; money that the medium is a token. And in this term of reference we may note the further definition of "currency" coined (if the paronomasia be permitted) by that great scholar in this field, Paul Einzig, as "money actually in circulation or capable of being put into circulation".<sup>2</sup>

An article may, of course, play a multiple role. Quiggin, in her intensive survey of primitive monies,<sup>3</sup> quotes an amusing example of how an object can be at once a currency, a religious symbol, and an ornament. She relates how catechumens of a certain Uganda tribe received from the Catholic Mission metal crosses as signs of their conversion. As soon as a convert had received his cross he would go off to visit a neighbouring tribe where he exchanged his cross for a goat. Later he would enter the mission again as a fresh catechumen. To the Fathers the crosses were religious symbols; to the first tribal group they represented currency and could purchase goats; while the second people prized them as ornaments in their head-dresses.

Nigeria is no exception to the pattern of early civilizations. Lacking a standard unit of exchange, it nevertheless enjoyed the economic favours of specialised division of labour and of surplus commodities (features notably absent in the early civilizations of East and Central Africa). Its pre-currency period is marked by the customary characteristics of silent trade and barter. Silent trade was noted in Africa by as ancient a chronicler as Herodotus,<sup>4</sup> and over two thousand years later we find this delightful cameo in Mary Kingsley's narrative:

I have often seen on market roads a little space cleared by the wayside, and neatly laid with plantain leaves, whereon were very tidily arranged various little articles for sale—a few kola nuts, leaves of tobacco, cakes of salt, a few heads of maize, or a pile of yams or sweet potatoes. Against each class of articles so many cowrie shells or beans are placed, and, always hanging from a branch above or sedately sitting in the middle of the shop, a little fetish. The number of cowrie shells or beans indicate the price of the individual articles in the various heaps and the little fetish is there to see that anyone who does not place in the stead of the articles their proper price or who meddles with the till shall swell up and burst. In the cases of silent trade that I have seen, no doubt it was done mostly for convenience, one person being thereby enabled to have several shops open at but little

1. R. C. Temple.

2. Paul Einzig, *Primitive Money*, 1949, pp. 326-27.

3. A. Hingston Quiggin, *A Survey of Primitive Money*, 1949.

4. *Melpomene*, IV, 96.

working expense, but I have seen it employed as a method of trading between tribes at war with each other.<sup>1</sup>

With anecdotes of barter, too, the journals of Nigerian explorers abound,<sup>2</sup> and once again it is Mary Kingsley who provides an amusing illustration from the days of the palm-oil ruffians when barter flourished. The Krubois, whose leader she named King Coffee, were about to be paid off and the ship's captain, in the belief that such a *rara avis* as a female passenger to the West Coast could be but a missionary, announced his virtuous intention of paying his crew in money instead of the suspect though customary gin and gunpowder.

King Coffee's face was a study. If Captain X whom he knew of old, had stood on his head and turned bright blue all over with yellow spots before his eyes, it would not have been anything like such a shock. 'What for good him ting, Cappy?' he asked. 'What for good him ting for we country? I suppose you gib gin, tobacco, gun, he be fit for trade, but money....' Here his Majesty's feelings flew ahead of the royal command of language, great as that was, and he expectorated with profound feeling and expression.<sup>3</sup>

John Holt himself records<sup>4</sup> how he bought a large canoe on the Liberian Coast for five guns, five three-gallon jars, fifty brass rods, a case of gin, eight gallons of rum, thirty heads of tobacco, five straw hats, one case of pipes and a beaver hat. Barter rates then current were for a large 44 lb. tusk four yards of red velvet and six of scarlet cloth, worth about sixteen shillings, while a 30 lb. tusk would be bought for four yards of scarlet cloth and a looking-glass. In the early days of trading on the Niger a steamer would take her cargo of merchandise upstream and remain there until all of it had been exchanged. We read how a riverain farmer would come timidly aboard and spread his produce on deck; the English trader would set down beside it a strip of cloth worth a fraction of the value of the produce and then, if the seller appeared discontented, add a penknife or a few strings of beads until the bargain was concluded.

The Royal Niger Company carried out nearly all its transactions by barter, although they modified this by introducing a scale of values. For instance, if a farmer brought along to the 'factory', as the trading stations were known, a quantity of sheanuts or palm-oil, the agent would calculate its value in English money and then allow his customer to choose salt, Manchester goods, etc., to an equivalent value. As late as 1903 we come across Lugard complaining bitterly of the companies' insistence on barter:

A factor which greatly militates against my efforts to promote the

1. M. H. Kingsley, *West African Studies*, 1899, p.248.
2. For a review of the variety of presents and trade-goods carried by travellers to West Africa in the XIX century, see A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, "'Dash' It all!" *West African Annual*, 1967, pp.27-32.
3. M. H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, 1897, p.647.
4. The diary of John Holt was privately printed in 1948.

circulation of coinage—which should promote and facilitate trade and would very greatly assist the Administration in the collection of taxes and duties—is the refusal of the sole European firm which has any large connection in the country to purchase any produce except with barter goods and their unwillingness to accept cash when tendered by natives (or anything but produce) for their goods. Presumably they thus hope to make a double profit.<sup>1</sup>

In the following year, however, the Niger Company agreed to purchase produce with cash if the farmer specifically requested it.<sup>2</sup> Yet no householder in Nigeria today would pretend that barter has completely died out, for often a Hausa trader is only too anxious to take, with his handful of shillings, some magazines and cast-off clothes in exchange for his piece of Kano leatherwork or Bida silverware. Finally, as I have demonstrated in another article,<sup>3</sup> barter still obtains among the Mandara pagan people of the Northern Cameroons.

Although remoteness caused by geography, social differences or tribal hostility may have contributed to the slow advent of currency in Nigeria, the basic human element must not be overlooked. There is the African's deep conservatism, and there is also his love of extended bargaining coupled with his disappointment and disgust at anything so unenterprising as a standard price. Congolese commerce has been described as *une sorte de jeu, auquel on se livre avec passion*<sup>4</sup> and the Hausa trader's business acumen is well known. Only a few years ago in Kano a middleman made his fortune by holding over his purchase of groundnuts until the following season, when the Marketing Board blessed his speculation by raising the price from £19 to £35 a ton. Coinage is by its very nature closely related to a *prix fixe* and authorities have often observed how the African's reluctance to use coins is deepened by the fact that they curtail his opportunities for disputation. Any Nigerian will tell you how, wonders apart, the multiple Kingsway stores make a very dull form of marketing, and his first reaction to a Red Cross bazaar is to bargain with the bewildered memsahibs who have been brought up on price tickets.

The variety of articles that have been used as currency throughout the world reads rather like a catalogue of Believe-It-or-Not tales. Coconuts in the Nicobars, mulberries in Turkestan; beeswax and camphor in Borneo; in Melanesia teeth, whether of porpoise or boars' tusks, and feathers. The Congo, renowned for its oddities of currency, used iron bells, spear money, gongs, porcelain beads, elephants' hair (one tail=two slaves) and the huge copper Handa

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1. *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria*: 1900-1911, p.185.

2. *Ibid.*, p.310.

3. A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, "Tax and Travel Among the Hill-Tribes of Northern Adamawa", *Africa*, October 1956.

4. Quoted by Quiggin.

crosses. Some of these may perhaps be included on sufferance as cataloguer's license, for the distinction between currency and barter is a fine one, but the principal currencies of Nigeria, which we shall now examine, are above suspicion.

One of the earliest references to trading transactions on the Guinea Coast is given by Pereira.<sup>1</sup> Writing of the ship's purchase of yams and sheep in one of the Bonny mouths in c.1510, he notes how "our ships buy these things for copper bracelets, which are here greatly prized; for eight or ten bracelets you can obtain one slave". There is a reference to the brass ring currency of Calabar by Barbot,<sup>2</sup> who talks of Dutch and British factors importing "a great deal of copper in small bars, round and equal, about three feet long, weighing about a pound and a quarter". Along the Cross river at that period a male slave was purchaseable for 38 of these copper bars.

Among the generous distribution of the shells of conchylia as money, none has exceeded the cowrie in popularity. It is of the cowrie that we shall first treat in detail, for it ranks as one of the most distinctive and widespread of Nigerian currencies. Of its unexpected acceptance as money and of its inherent attraction Quiggin has written:

The ideal properties of money are that it shall be handy, lasting, easy to count and difficult to counterfeit, so there are not many rivals to the precious metals. The most remarkable exception is the cowrie, which, starting on its travels before gold and silver coinage was in general use, extended its range farther than any form of money before or since... The reasons for its popularity are both obvious and concealed. The surface and the shape are attractive and decorative, so that they are used as ornaments and playthings even where they are common. And when they are carried into inland regions, they acquire the added charm of novelty touched with mystery, and the enhanced value given to all exotic products.<sup>3</sup>

The etymology derives from the Urdu *kauri*. Of the several types of cowrie two, *cypraea moneta* and *cypraea annulus*, are distinguished in Nigeria. They were, however, indiscriminately mixed in use; though some authorities have tried to describe the *cypraea moneta* as the large cowrie and the ring cowrie as the small, size cannot be accepted as a criterion in conchology. The genuine money cowrie, a clean, whitish-brown shell about an inch long, with crumpled back and lips, came originally from the Maldivé Islands in the Indian Ocean. The main distribution centre was Bengal, whence they were borne along the great trade routes through Afghanistan to Persia and into Europe. There is, however, no question of their having been imported in the first instance to Nigeria solely by the European, as

1. P. Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, c.1510, p.132.

2. J. Barbot, *Description of the Coast of North and South Guinea*, 1746.

3. Quiggin, *op. cit.*, p.25.

some scholars have argued. James Welsh, who was one of the first Englishmen to visit Benin, writes in the sixteenth century: "Their monie is pretie white shells, for gold and silver we saw none".<sup>1</sup> Again, a writer refers to the Fulani herdsmen of Nigeria who "provided for themselves in the matter of currency with cowries or shells of Maldives, which originally came to them by the caravans of Egypt".<sup>2</sup> This, indeed, is a point much stressed by Dr. M. D. W. Jeffreys in an article<sup>3</sup> which seems to have escaped the all-seeing eye of Quiggin, who strangely omits this essay from her extensive bibliography. Jeffreys sets out to prove that the cowrie, used by the Egyptians as foreign tokens but not as current money, was brought into the Western Sudan in its original Egyptian form of counting, a sexagesimal system as against the prevailing decimal system.

It seems probable that the cowrie flowed into Nigeria in two streams. One was that of the Arab traders, who brought cowries by dhows along the Red Sea and Indian Ocean coastline, partly as ballast and partly for trade.<sup>4</sup> These soon found their way across the great caravan routes to Chad and the Upper Niger, or overland from Zanzibar past the Lakes towards the Upper Congo, and the use of the cowrie gradually spread down these rivers and their tributaries. The cowrie was introduced into Kano at the beginning of the XVIII century, during the reign of Muhammed Sharaf (1703-1731).<sup>5</sup> The other was the trade by sea-landed cowries, which penetrated upstream.<sup>6</sup> This is well described by the 17th century agent-general of the Royal Company of Africa and the Islands of America:

From the above-named places they are dispersed to the Dutch and English factories in India; then brought over to Europe more especially by the Dutch, who make a great advantage of them according to the occasion the several trading nations of Europe have for this trash, to carry on their traffick at the coast of Guinea and of Angola, to purchase slaves or other goods of Africa and are only proper for that trade; no other people in the universe putting such a value on them as the Guineans.<sup>7</sup>

Even today veteran Coasters can remember the firm of Stuart and Douglas who used to import shiploads of cowries to Lagos and Sapele until this trade was prohibited by a proclamation of 1904.

Mungo Park reckoned that 250 cowries were worth one shilling, and that 100 were enough to feed himself and his horse for a day. He records how he paid a thousand cowries to a chief to allow him to

1. Quoted by M. D. W. Jeffreys in an article on cowries in *Nigeria*, 15, 1938.

2. J. J. Williams, *Hebrewisms of West Africa*, 1930, p.244.

3. Jeffreys, op.cit. See also his "Some Negro Currencies in Nigeria", *S.A.M.A.B.*, 5, 1954 (Durban).

4. See, for example, A. H. Quiggin, *Trade Routes and Currency in East Africa*, Rhodes-Livingstone Museum Occasional Paper No.5.

5. H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 1928, Vol. III, p.123.

6. One of the principal distribution points was the port of Badagry.

7. Barbot, quoted in Churchill, *Collection of Voyages*, 1704, Vol. V, p.338.

bury one of his escorts and how a father paid 2,000 to ransom his enslaved son. At Sansanding, Park opened shop with a "choice assortment of European articles", which gave him such a run that at times he was forced to employ three tellers when his daily turnover reached more than twenty-five thousand cowries.<sup>1</sup>

When Barth reached Kano in 1851 he found that:

even the common currency of the Kano market, the *uri*, 2,500 of which are equal to the Spanish or Austrian dollar, forms an important article of import and commerce, though I have not been able to ascertain that a large quantity is ever introduced at one time. Nevertheless that must sometimes happen, as a great amount of shells has been exported to Bornu, where they have recently been introduced as currency; and this obviously explains why since the year 1848 the demand for these shells has so greatly increased on the coast.<sup>2</sup>

In Kukawa Barth settled the debts of Richardson by distributing 70,000 shells to eight creditors. Before setting out for Timbuktu, Barth spent 775,000 *kurdi* in Zinder and a further 1,308,000 shells in Katsina on presents and provisions for the journey! A generation later, a man paid the Sarkin Sudan 400,000 cowries to ransom his wife captured in a slave raid; he had originally bought her for 100,000 but the total ransom of 1,200,000 shells took into account her three children and the unborn one that she was carrying.<sup>3</sup> The value of a cowrie at that time was about one hundred to a halfpenny.

In the coastal areas a hole was often broken through the crown and the cowries were threaded and fastened into "strings" of 40 or 100, and fifty or twenty such strings were equal to a dollar. In the interior, however, they might be heaped and measured by the bushel, or else laboriously counted one by one. In an account of the disastrous 1841 Niger expedition<sup>4</sup> we read how the purser of the *Wilberforce* found, "after a careful and tedious inquiry", that about 400 cowries weighed one lb. and that an imperial pint measure contained about 500 shells. King Dosumu of Lagos transferred sovereignty of his capital town to the British Government in 1861 for an annuity of 1,200 bags of cowries, worth about £1,000.

Though the 1960 vintage of Administrative Officer may have some experience of counting, with his staff of messengers, thousands of shillings received as a specie remittance from the Treasury or as tax from a pagan village, his labour is little compared to that of the cowrie-counter. This professional man used to be found in all the large trading centres of the Western Sudan and he might count up to

1. Entry of October 8th., 1805.

2. H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, 1857, Vo. II, p.142.

3. M. Smith, *Baba of Karo*, 1954, p.69.

4. W. Allen, *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger*, 1844.

300,000 cowries in a day. Listen to Barth's description of cowrie mathematics:

I went with Overweg to Wankshi, who was just occupied in that most tedious of all commercial transactions, namely the counting of shells; for in all these inland countries of Central Africa the cowries are not, as is customary in some regions near the coast, fastened together in strings of one hundred each, but are separate. Even the sacks made of rushes, containing 20,000 cowries each, as the governors of the towns are in the habit of packing them up, no private individual will receive without counting them out. The general custom in so doing is to count them by fives, in which operation some are very expert, and then, according to the amount of the sum, to form heaps of two hundred or a thousand each. . . .<sup>1</sup>

When cowries were introduced, so scarce were they that in Uganda, for instance, two shells would purchase a woman. But as their value gradually decreased, their bulkiness as a form of currency was bound to cause travellers much trouble. One 'mat' was a man's load, a measure out of all proportion to its value. Canon Robinson relates how, on his trek to Kano just before the British occupation, he could not afford to sell the horse that fell sick, as its value in cowries would have required fifteen extra carriers, to whom he would have had to pay all the money they carried and a great deal besides!<sup>2</sup> Later he sold to one of the Emir's ministers rolls of silk for which he received more than three-quarters of a million cowries<sup>3</sup>. It is little wonder that Stanley spent sleepless nights before setting out on his travels:

The second order I gave was to enlist 600 Zanzibari porters, and purchase 2,800 yards of mixed cloth as barter goods and 3,600 lbs. of beads and one ton of wire, brass, copper, and iron.<sup>4</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the arithmetical table read:<sup>5</sup>

40 cowries	=	one string	=	$\frac{1}{4}$ d	—	1d
5 strings	=	one bunch	=	3d	—	6d
10 bunches	=	one head	=	1/9d	—	2/-
10 heads	=	one bag	=	18/-		

One bag contained 20,000 cowries.

There were, naturally enough fluctuations in the local rate. In the remote areas of the Benue basin the French expedition of 1891<sup>6</sup> found the rate of exchange at 11/3d for five heads, while the Germans in the following year at Yola paid £1 for 40,000 cowries.<sup>7</sup> In Kukawa,

1. Barth, op.cit., II, p.28.

2. C. H. Robinson, *Hausaland*, 1896, p.46.

3. Ibid., p.105.

4. H. M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa*, 1897, p.13.

5. Per R. H. Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa*, 1863.

6. That of Lieutenant Mizon.

7. S. Passarge, *Adamaua*, 1894.

just before the chaotic invasion of Rabeh, eggs could be bought at eight cowries each while a chicken cost between 52 and 160 cowries, depending on its size. Canon Robinson paid his carriers 8,000 cowries each, which he reckoned as 6/-, for carrying his 80—90 lb. loads from Zaria to Kano.<sup>1</sup> By 1902 the rates were ranging from 4,000 at Ilorin to 1,200 at Sokoto for one shilling,<sup>2</sup> while two years later the town of Bida was assessed for the first time by the British administration, at three hundred bags of cowries valued at 7/3d a bag.<sup>3</sup> As late as 1908 Assistant Residents were compelled to pass an examination in the handling of a suspense account at the Treasury on their first posting so as to be acquainted with the method of entering cowries and cloth collected as tribute until it was converted to cash.<sup>4</sup>

The Nigerian cowrie died a natural death, brought about by a demand for a more portable medium of exchange, though it was doubtless hastened by Government's measures to introduce coinage. For a while, cowries remained in favour for minor transactions, as the threepenny piece was the smallest silver unit in circulation, but the introduction of the useful *anini* or tenth of a penny soon replaced them. By 1923 they had entirely vanished from the main centres of trade, leaving behind, however, their memory in the Hausa word for money (*kurdi*: sing., *wuri*, a cowrie shell) and the Hausa *dari*: this latter means a hundred, and is always used to express a halfpenny in preference to the anglicised *sisin kwabo*.

A final word on the cowrie. The Annual Report for Nigeria, 1932, mentions the sudden reappearance of cowries in the Bida and Agaie markets in Nupe country. This was blamed by the Administration on the crisis of the slump, which created so serious an economic situation that the *anini* proved still too large a unit of exchange for the impecunious peasantry. Cowries were traded in Abuja markets at 500 to the penny, and in Bida at 250—incidentally, the official rate of exchange at the time the cowrie had been abandoned. The dirty look of the cowries lent support to the suspicion that the Nupe had buried thousands of these shells when they had been declared void as money, a theory confirmed by the fact that the neighbouring Gbari pagans had earlier asked whether they might make their trading transactions half in money and half in their hidden supply of cowries.<sup>5</sup>

Related to the cowrie currency, but beyond our terms of study except to draw attention to the phenomenon, is the curious marginelle currency,<sup>6</sup> found in what used to be known as French West Africa

1. Robinson, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
2. *Annual Reports*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
3. *Nupe Provincial Gazetteer*, 1919.
4. 'Langa Langa', *Up Against It In Nigeria*, 1922, p.18.
5. S. F. Nadel, a notice in *Africa*, 1937, p. 488.
6. Two of the best articles on this currency are contained in the *Bulletin I.F.A.N.* (B): M. D W. Jeffreys, 1953, pp.143-151, "The marginelle currency of Timbuktu", and R. Mauny, "La monnaie marginelloide de l'Ouest Africain", 1957, pp.659-669 (illustr.).

and predominant in Timbuktu. Tradition there maintains that this currency was used some time after 1600 and immediately prior to the introduction of cowries.

Another popular medium of exchange in Nigeria was slaves, representing the higher values while cowries or dollars provided the small change. Mungo Park reckoned that a young man of twenty or so would fetch £18. A century later a visitor writes that £7 to £10 would be demanded for a girl who had just reached puberty, while a boy in his 'teens cost £6 and a man of thirty only £4.<sup>1</sup> The Bishop of Exeter, however, had received £12,729. 4. 4d. as compensation for the release of his six hundred and fifty-five slaves! Amongst the Fulani, slaves were a useful currency for purchases beyond twenty bags of cowries, and the first O.C. troops at the Fulani centre of Yola was supplied with a special issue of Maria Theresa dollars at a nominal value in an attempt to persuade the local people to adopt a cash economy instead of slaves.<sup>2</sup> With no free labour, no portable currency worth speaking of, and no means of transporting goods except by head-loading, slaves served a varied role, as this quotation will illustrate:

A merchant going from Kano to the ivory markets in German Adamawa proposes taking with him a stock of tobies and cotton goods and a supply of cowries for making small purchases on the road. . . . all bulky articles. Accordingly he goes to the slave market and purchases the number of slaves necessary to carry his merchandise and provisions for the journey. After travelling for a few days he finds that the consumption of the provisions has reduced the loads of his carriers, and he is able to dispense with the services of one or two of them, and for these he can always obtain a fair price. At Bautshi or Yola he stays for several days to enjoy himself, and pays his bill by dropping a slave. Thus in reality slaves are currency, fluctuating perhaps but portable, far more so than their value in cowries, the only other universal currency of the country.<sup>3</sup>

As recently as 1955 the Assembly of the French Union was reported<sup>4</sup> to have taken official cognizance of an account, presented on behalf of its commission for social affairs, concerning the slave traffic between Africa and certain Arab countries. In it, allegations were made that young slaves, many of them from Nigeria, the Cameroons and French Equatorial Africa, were being sold in Saudi Arabia, at prices ranging up to 400,000 francs for a young girl of about fifteen years of age.

Beads, like cowries, have at one time or another been accepted as currency throughout Oceania, Asia, America, Europe, and Africa.

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1. Robinson, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

2. *Yola Province Reports* (unpublished MSS), 1901.

3. A. Mockler-Ferryman, *British Nigeria*, 1902, p. 243.

4. *The Times*, February 16, 1956.

Their value as an apotropaic must be underestimated, though doubtless traders exaggerated their magic properties. The 'aggry' beads of the West Coast, which still provide a challenging nummery mystery, have by some scholars been traced to Benin (where red coral was a royal monopoly and a token of office). In Ashanti, their value was deemed to be their weight in gold, calculated perhaps with the beautiful gold-dust weights that marked the Ashanti economy.<sup>1</sup> In Northern Nigeria there is little evidence of native beads being used as currency apart from the brass pendants used by the Tiv and the large stone bead which figured in the purchase of slaves. Beads, however, were always prominent in trade goods, and in Northern Nigeria today there is a keen demand for them among, for instance, the Mumuye and Marghi, as ornamental dress, though with a volatile and intransigent insistence on the right size and colour as determined by current vogue.

Cloth was firmly established as currency in Nigeria long before the advent of European trade cloth. A most interesting account of cloth currency is to be found in Barth's diaries of Bornu and Adamawa, two kingdoms which were the no-man's land between the overland trade route and the seaboard route of cowries, a sort of fiscal desert to which the cowrie penetrated but slowly. In Bornu there was no recognised currency and cowries were introduced as a speculation by the Shehu about 1840. The ancient standard pound of copper, known as *rotl*, had been replaced by *gabaga* or cotton strips; when cowries were brought into Bornu, a cotton strip was assessed at eight cowries, and four of these *gabaga* made the *rotl*. The dollar varied between 50 and 100 *rotl*. Of Adamawa, Barth writes:

The standard of the market is the native cotton, woven, as it is all over negroland, in narrow strips, called *leppi*, of about two and a quarter inches in width. The smallest measure of cotton is the *nanande* which equals four fathoms. Seven *nanande* make one *dora*, meaning a small shirt of extremely coarse workmanship and scarcely to be used for dress; and from two or five *dora* make one *tobe*.<sup>2</sup>

Forty years later another traveller<sup>3</sup> to Adamawa noted how the inhabitants valued their cotton by its colour rather than by the material, "a gaudy red stuff being the favourite, whilst a plain white was much valued by them since they use it when torn in narrow strips as currency". Even more recently in this area I have come across cloth used as an element of brideprice: the Mumuye prize the large roll known as the *langtang*, traditionally woven in the summit village of Sensi-Dong, while the Higi of the Northern Cameroons recognise no

1. K. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in Modern Ashanti*, 1951, p.79 gives a complete table of these weights, ranging, from 3/- to £24.
2. Barth, *op. cit.*, p.446.
3. A. Mockler-Ferryman, *Up The Niger*, 1892, p.114.

brideprice that does not include the regulation number of outsize black and white gowns.<sup>1</sup>

Salt is another widely accepted currency of the African continent, from the Sahara to Ethiopia. In thus classifying it as money, I am aware that I am in disagreement with another of the authoritative definitions of money, that of M. J. Herskovits who prefers to limit money to "any kind of . . . denominator that itself is not a consumption good".<sup>2</sup> The great salt trade-routes, with their direct influence on the caravan routes and hence on the slave trade, converged on Nigeria, the Tripoli route leading through the salt region of Bilma and Geidam. Of the indispensability of this currency Quiggin writes:

Doubtless our earliest ancestors lived happily without either iron or salt; both are of late introduction in many parts of the world and carnivorous people can do without any additional salination. But as iron holds its own through its superiority over the materials it replaces, so salt, once enjoyed, spoils the taste for saltless food, especially where the food is mainly vegetable. Hence the salt trade in interior Africa seems more like blackmail than barter. In a country like our own, with the sea accessible all the way round us, and ample deposits of salt inland, it is difficult to realize the salt-hunger in those parts of Africa where the sea is far distant and inland deposits are sparse. Mahieu describes it vividly. Speaking of imported salt in the Congo, where it arrives in little squares like lumps of sugar, and constitutes *une véritable monnaie*, he says that the natives are so fond of the taste that successive possessors of this money can rarely resist a lick.<sup>3</sup>

The inland salt was dug out in slabs, about the size of a headload. Barth tells us a slab cost about 3,000 cowries or a dollar in Timbuktu. Today in the Northern Cameroons the *mangul of salt* is a very important item. The slabs brought from Geidam along the Lake Chad route are boiled in conical pots, which are then broken, leaving a cone or sack-shaped cake. These figure in all brideprice in the area, as a capital investment rather than for immediate consumption, and are very definitely a live currency.

Before we study iron as a currency, for which phenomenon Africa offers the classical continent, there are several lesser known, and perhaps ephemeral, neo-currencies of Nigeria that deserve to be mentioned. Brass wire hoops, worth about threepence, were a common currency until their importation was stopped in 1904. In Southern Nigeria there was a rare currency of arrowhead-shaped pieces of iron, valued at about fifty to a penny. Barth found villages where the only currency accepted was cloves or needles. Indeed, he was expressly

1. For a modern parallel see also Mary Douglas, "Raffia Cloth in the Lele Economy", *Africa*, 1958, pp.109-122.
2. M. J. Herskovits, *The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples*, 1940, p.213.
3. Quiggin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

advised by Beke to take with him a large supply of needles as the wherewithal to make his purchases of goods and services. In Nupe land soda-water bottles fetched a fine price in the days of the Royal Niger Company.<sup>1</sup>

Of the trade goods used along the Bights of Biafra and Benin some mention has already been made. Excellent studies of this subject are to be found in contributions by Mary Kingsley,<sup>2</sup> G. I. Jones,<sup>3</sup> and K. O. Dike.<sup>4</sup> The last-named scholar (whose chapter on trade goods along the lower Niger seems to have been overlooked by G. I. Jones in his otherwise unexceptionable account) refers to the novel Delta media of exchange such as "bars", "crews", and "copper bars". Besides cowries and manillas, the one currency that gained wide circulation between Europeans and Africans was the Spanish doubloon and dollar, and British subsidies to the Delta states were actually calculated in dollars. Of all the currencies then in use Dike maintains that only guns and alcohol achieved any stability of exchange rates. The Royal Niger Company refused to follow the practice of importing gallons of trade gin and using it as currency, but the Liquor Traffic Commission of 1909 was satisfied that gin had been recognised as money: "Trade spirits, especially gin, are not used merely for drinking, but are in some parts of the country employed as a substitute for currency". Witnesses before the Commission<sup>5</sup> testified that in some villages it was impossible to buy food unless you were prepared to pay for it in gin, and an episcopal assertion that Government had accepted court fines paid in gin led to a Parliamentary question in the House of Commons.

Iron, besides complying with the primary needs of a currency, that it shall be portable, durable, recognizable and divisible, also has the quality of mystery, which has been exploited by the guilds of smiths in most of Nigeria. Currency bars of iron have been used in different parts of the country, and in the Northern Trusteeship Territory the *dubul* can still be found in any pagan market, worth between a shilling and 1/6d. These iron bars may ultimately be beaten into hoes but, unfashioned, they form an essential element in the brideprice of the Mandara hill tribes. Elsewhere in the Benue valley the *taji* of the Batta and kindred tribes are more decorative than the flat bars of the northernly peoples, often having spirals at each end. The *ibia* iron currency of the Tiv and the *akika* of the Idoma were described over a hundred years by that giftedly observant consul, T. J. Hutchinson.<sup>6</sup>

1. There is an interesting display of pre-British currency media used in Northern Nigeria to be seen among the Exhibits in the show-cases outside the Premier's Office, Kaduna.
2. Mary Kingsley, *West African Studies*, 1899, Appendix III.
3. G. I. Jones, "Native and Trade Currencies in Southern Nigeria during the XVIII and XIX Centuries", *Africa*, 1958, pp. 42-54.
4. K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*, 1956, pp.104-8.
5. Cmd. 4906 and 4907, 1909.
6. T. J. Hutchinson, *Impressions of Western Africa*, 1858.

Among the Bali in the Cameroons iron rings were exchanged at the rate of 25 to the German pfennig. From southern Nigeria comes the well-known Ogoja penny, a Y-shaped iron bar, worth about a half-penny. It is Mungo Park who has a most significant comment on the influence of iron bars over general currency terms:

On the coast the inhabitants have adopted a practice which I believe is peculiar to themselves. In their early intercourse with Europeans the article that attracted most notice was iron. Its utility, in forming the instruments of war and husbandry, made it preferable to all others; and iron soon became the measure by which the value of all other commodities was ascertained. Thus a certain quantity of goods, of whatever denomination, appearing to be equal in value to a bar of iron, constituted, in the trader's phraseology, a bar of that particular merchandise. Twenty leaves of tobacco, for instance, were considered as a bar of tobacco; and a gallon of spirits (or rather, half spirits and half water) as a bar of rum. As, however, it must unavoidably happen that, according to the plenty or scarcity of goods at market in proportion to demand, the relative value would be subject to continual fluctuation, greater precision has been found necessary, and at this time the current value of a single bar of any kind is fixed by the whites at two shillings sterling. Thus a slave, whose price is £15, is said to be worth 150 bars.<sup>1</sup>

Iron leads us to what is perhaps Nigeria's most celebrated currency, the manilla, which for many years dominated the markets of the Oil Rivers Protectorate. The Latin origin of this word, a diminutive of *manus*, a hand, has probably come down through the Portuguese. The most vivid description of this quaint currency is found in a letter written by Consul Hutchinson to the Foreign Office in 1858:

They are pieces of copper of a horseshoe form, about four inches in the measurement of the circumference of their circle, and about half an inch in that of their density, being terminated by two lozenge shaped ends facing one another.<sup>2</sup>

The origin of the manilla has not been clearly established. One theory, condemned as "generally accepted though improbable"<sup>3</sup> yet without happier substitute, is that they were originally shaped from the bolts of ships wrecked along the African littoral. Another claims that fishermen hauled up in their seines a number of brass torques, which they showed to the early Portuguese traders and asked for them to be copied in Europe. Again, they may have been related to the penannular ring money of Egypt, introduced by Phoenician traders, so that the Portuguese traders' bracelets (*manilloes*) were welcomed because of their similarity. At any rate, they became

1. Mungo Park, *Travels &c.*, 1799, Chapter II.
2. Quoted by R. F. A. Grey, "Manillas", *Nigerian Field*, 2, 1951, pp.52-66 (illustr.)
3. Letter in *Nigerian Field*, January 1936, p.42. This issue also contains a photograph of manillas, valued at 19=1/-.

a firm currency and the Portuguese began to import them in tons. By 1505 we find a slave valued at twelve to fifteen copper manillas. By the end of the nineteenth century the table went: 5 standard manillas = 1 bottle of gin.

There were various sizes of manilla,<sup>1</sup> but the most popular by far was the *okpoho*. This weighed three ounces and was redeemed at 80 to the £. The snake manilla, of beautiful design, weighed 5½ lbs., while the king manilla weighed over 6 lbs. and measured eleven inches. Manillas were made up of 65% copper and 25% lead. At one time an attempt was made to reduce the cost of manufacturing manillas by forging them in cast iron, but it was a failure, since they would not ring true when struck, as all good manillas do.

The Dutch and English traders spread the manilla as a means of buying produce throughout the Niger delta. By the eighteenth century manillas were being specially manufactured for the Coast trade. The progressive introduction of English coinage began to limit the popularity of the manilla, and in 1902 the High Commissioner for Southern Nigeria prohibited their importation except under permit. In 1911 manillas ceased to be legal tender. The 1919 Manilla Currency Ordinance, which aimed at prohibiting the use by non-natives of manilla currency, remained a dead letter, and despite a debate in the Legislative Council in March 1935, it was not until 1948 that a bill was passed to withdraw all manillas and limit a person's holding to two hundred for ceremonial purposes only. This "Operation Manilla" was carried out by Treasury teams between October 1948 and March 1949. The number of manillas redeemed was over 32,000,000 weighing nearly 2,500 tons. These were exported as metal and fetched £153,000, the net cost of the operation to the Nigerian Government being £248,000.<sup>2</sup>

Reference has already been made to the dollar. This is the popular *talari* or Maria Theresa dollar of 1780. Although it went out of use in Austria in 1854, over two million were minted for export between 1891 and 1896, and in the 1930s the Royal Mint was authorised to strike 150,000 to assist British trade. This dollar has always been very popular in the Red Sea region. Curiously enough, the date of 1780 has been retained on all the coins struck, whether by the original Vienna Mint or by the subsequent Italian (for the Abyssinian campaign) and Royal Mints. Just as at one time in Nigeria market women would not accept a coin bearing the face of the king facing left when the new issue showed the monarch facing right, so it is widely believed

1. These are listed (9 varieties), together with photographs, at pp.282-84 of P. A. Talbot, *Tribes of the Niger Delta*, 1932.
2. United Africa Company's *Statistical and Economic Review*, March & Sept., 1949.

that a Maria Theresa dollar lacking the date of 1780 is worthless.<sup>1</sup> This dollar, since it is the sole coin among the Nigerian currencies that we are considering, is the most appropriate leadup to the introduction of coinage into Nigeria.<sup>2</sup>

In Northern Nigeria a very good start was made by paying the troops in English coins of the realm, which started their circulation in markets near military stations. A stable coinage was necessary, both to pay Government employees (including local PWD artisans) and as a monetary unit for taxation purposes. The importation of Maria Theresa dollars was prohibited in 1903 but great exception was taken in the local markets of Nupe land to the issue of copper coinage and when tendered as purchase money or change it was often refused. Bornu remained the home of the dollar for many years, valued at between 3/- and 4/- and taking about twelve to fifteen for a good horse. Today, a *gursu* or Maria Theresa dollar can be easily bought in the market at Maiduguri for 7/6d to 8/-; in Adamawa, where Fulani women like to wear it as an ornament, the dollar is rarer and dearer.

Lugard commented in 1905 that "coins are still chiefly limited as a medium of exchange between the European and the native, and the bulk of what is in circulation is paid back in taxes".<sup>3</sup> Mindful maybe of Lord Chalmers's dictum on the 1825 Order-in-Council, which opened the new era of colonial currency, that "the shilling was to circulate wherever the British drum was heard", he aimed to introduce a white metal coinage in two denominations. These were to be a tenth and a hundredth of a shilling, with an English inscription on the face and an Arabic one on the obverse. Later he decided to strike coins of a penny and a tenth of a penny: "The coins will have a circular hole in the centre for stringing and will be without any pictorial design in deference to Mohammedan prejudice". A year afterwards Lugard was able to report the *anini* was a great success, but "incalculable harm" was being done to the ready circulation of coinage by the large number of counterfeit tinned pennies and halfpennies and even the "uncivilised tribes of Bauchi" were circulating halfpennies galvanised with tin as shillings. Indeed progress was slow. As late as 1916 the Resident of Yola wrote:

Coin is not looked on as a currency but as an article of trade. The local trader does not think of a bull being worth ten shillings but that ten shillings cost a bull. It is not stock that is cheap, but cash dear.<sup>4</sup>

1. For further information on the Maria Theresa dollar reference should be made to C. Peez and J. Raudnitz, *Geschichte des Maria-Theresien Talers* 1898; M.-M. Fischel, *Le Thaler de Maria-Thérèse*, 1913; and *A Bank in Battledress*, 1948, Barclay's D.C.O.
2. An interesting parallel is found in E. J. Wright, "Remarks on the early monetary position in Sierra Leone, with a description of the coinage adopted", *Sierra Leone Studies* (n.s.), 3, 1954.
3. *Annual Reports*, op. cit., pp.413-414.
4. *Yola Province Reports*, 1916 (unpublished MSS).

But in the long run the portability of coinage convinced, as a typical entry from an Assistant Resident's diary shows:

I bought a fine-looking bay stallion here for £8; the owner had paid £13 for it in cowries, but was glad to get the money—it takes 150 men to carry £100 in cowries, hence the popularity of our coinage!<sup>1</sup>

The following table of British sterling silver issued for West Africa helps to show the rate at which coinage passed into circulation:—<sup>2</sup>

Year	£
1886—1890	24,426
1891—1895	116,323
1896—1900	257,090
1901—1905	262,786
1906—1910	666,190

The popularisation of a coin currency took a notable step forward with the 1908 introduction of penny and tenth of a penny pieces. By 1925 over £7,000,000 worth of currency was in circulation in Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> In 1939 this had dropped to just under £6 million, but by 1946 the total figure passed £18 million; and of the £51 million worth of currency in circulation in 1953 over £20,000,000 consisted of currency notes—an increase over the 1939 figures of from 4 to 44 per cent, a striking indicator of confidence and stability in monetary habits.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the matter of West African currency. The Bank of British West Africa had at first enjoyed a monopoly of coin importation from the Mint, but after the report of the West African Currency Committee the privilege of supplying currency to West Africa was transferred to another organisation, the newly constituted West African Currency Board, which had its offices at the Crown Agents in London. This Board was constituted in November 1912:

to provide for and to control the supply of currency to the British West African Colonies and Protectorates, and to insure that the currency is maintained in satisfactory condition, and generally to watch over the interests of the dependencies in question so far as currency is concerned.

A similar Currency Board was established for East Africa in 1919, for the West African Currency Board proved to be what has since been widely acknowledged as the prototype of the standard currency system in colonial territories. The Board consisted of five members appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, drawn from the Bank of England and the Colonial Office, and presided over by one of the

1. M. Kisch, *Letters and Sketches from Northern Nigeria*, 1910, p.138.

2. Cmd. 6426, 1912, *Report of the West African Currency Board*.

3. *Nigeria Handbook*, 1926, p.71.

4. *The Economic Development of Nigeria*, I.B.R.D. Report, 1954, p.93.

two Crown Agents. Its income from investments was paid into a Currency Reserve Fund (by June 1950 this showed a surplus of £6 million over the Board's liabilities in the form of currency in circulation), but part of these profits were allowed to be distributed to the participating governments. For example, Nigeria received £213,000 in 1952-53, while in the first forty years of the Board's existence the following appreciable sums were paid out:-<sup>1</sup>

Nigeria	£4,076,000
Ghana	3,027,000
Sierra Leone	577,000
Gambia	220,000

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£7,900,000 to the nearest £000.

On 26th June 1913 new coins of a distinctive silver currency in denominations of 2/-, 1/-, 6d., and 3d., were legalised,<sup>2</sup> and in November 1915, the first currency notes, of £1, 10/- and 2/- were authorised.<sup>3</sup> These were issued in July 1916 and by 1919 the novelty had become so fashionable that even 1/- currency notes were in circulation. In his 1920 address to the Nigerian Legislative Council the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford, castigated these lesser currency notes:-

Flimsy paper notes of low denominational values are a form of currency that is utterly unsuitable, alike to the damp climatic conditions of the forest districts of the coast, and to the habits of the bulk of the population.

The slump and the issue of alloy coins corrected the excess of paper notes, and only those that were strictly helpful to trade were retained in circulation.

The first £5 note was issued by the West African Currency Board in 1919. This was perhaps too early a move, for it never became popular and its use virtually died out during the depression of the 'thirties. In the mid 'fifties a demand arose for a note of readier circulation and larger denomination, and the £5 note was introduced. This was of immense help to buying agents in those prosperous years, for a lorry could carry not much more than a mere £10,000 in coin.<sup>4</sup>

Nigeria's new currency was introduced last year. The notes—£70,000,000 worth—bear the name of the Central Bank of Nigeria and

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1. United Africa Company's *Statistical and Economic Review*, September 1951.

2. Cmd. 7791, 1914, *Report of the West African Currency Board*.

3. Cmd. 8372, 1916, *Report of the West African Currency Board*.

4. And so the lie was given to the remark, made in 1953 (Greaves, *op.cit.*, p.117, footnote) that "it must be remembered that paying a farmer in the bush a £5 note is hardly different from giving him a cheque. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for him to obtain change when he wants it, and he would probably fall victim to the fraud and chicanery which seem to thrive on all new developments in Africa".

the inscription "Federation of Nigeria". Thanks to a good propaganda campaign and an intelligent population, the country was spared the confusion of 1920, when the new 10/- notes were so suspect that in Nigeria they were exchanged for 7/- to 8/- in coin, the General Manager of the Railway complained that construction work on the eastern extension would have to be halted unless there was sufficient coin to pay all wages without recourse to paper money, and the Alake of Abeokuta even asked the Governor to withdraw the notes altogether. The Royal Mint received an order from Nigeria for over one thousand million coins in 1958; its Deputy Master paid tribute to the Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, whose "ready help and able negotiation made possible rapid settlement of the problems that attend any completely new coinage". Among the noticeably different items of Nigeria's new coinage are the design of the shilling on the reverse side, the smaller size of the penny, and the introduction of a 5/- note.

At the end of 1959 it was estimated by the Central Bank that over £54,000,000 of Nigerian currency was in circulation,<sup>1</sup> a sign of a healthy monetary system that may conveniently close the gap in our economic circle from cowrie to currency, from barter to bank.

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1. These figures are now published monthly in the *Federal Gazette*, Lagos.



## RESEARCH NOTES ON THE ROYAL NIGER COMPANY— ITS PREDECESSORS AND SUCCESSORS

*Submitted by*

G. L. BAKER

### (1) *Background*

THE most regrettable gap in the more recent history of Nigeria is the period between 1870 and 1900 when commercial firms were opening up the Interior. From 1850, when Dr. Barth started his travels in Nigeria, up to the end of 1869 when the Consulate at Lokoja was finally abandoned, a certain amount of information is available about the period from Consular reports and the reports of the various expeditions into the Interior; but after that time and until the Colonial Office assumed the Government of the Niger Territories on 1st January 1900 an air of secrecy descended on the activities of the commercial firms controlling the Niger and Benue rivers.

To some extent, especially in the earlier days, the lack of information is understandable. Unlike the Consuls, the trading Agents on the Coast were not obliged to send in regular reports of their activities to the British Government, or even to their Head Offices, whose prime concern was the amount of profit returned by their ventures. The methods used and the difficulties which had to be overcome in order to gain the required results were expected to be dealt with by the men on the spot without reference to their Headquarters. In any case, the firms were comparatively small and most were soon no longer to exist, so it is not surprising that they left behind no records.

However, of the time from when Mr. George Goldie Taubman appeared on the scene in 1877 and started co-ordinating the various commercial activities on the Niger, which culminated in the formation of the Royal Niger Company, Chartered and Limited in 1886, it is reasonable to expect that some sort of official record should still be available. This, unfortunately, is not the case. With the exception of one of the Company's Minute books which only covers the period 1882 to 1889, and a few letters, most of which can also be seen in the Foreign Office records, virtually no official documents of any historical value have been handed down to the Royal Niger Company's successor—The United Africa Company. Searches have been made on several occasions amongst the Company's records, as it seemed incredible that nothing further could be traced, but it has now been regretfully assumed that whatever other documents there may have been in the past must since have been destroyed.

In view of the fact that Goldie was the organizer and originator of almost every important step taken by the various companies he started, and communicated personally with the Coast on nearly all major issues, one cannot help wondering if he considered certain of the Head Office files were virtually his personal property. If this was so, it is likely that he took possession of such files and documents when he cut himself off from the Company in 1900, and these therefore would have been destroyed when he burnt his personal papers just after the outbreak of the 1914-18 War.

The Company having failed to leave behind any official documents of much value, one naturally looks for biographies and travel books, which officials of the Company may have written; but once again Goldie has foiled the historian. Each official of the Company, even those employed on a temporary basis for a specific task, had to enter into a bond of £1,000 contracting not to divulge to outsiders or newspapers any facts about the Company, or to write a book or pamphlet concerning the activities of the Company without the consent of the Company in writing. From the material now available, it is quite obvious that such permission was very seldom given. On top of this Goldie got his own family to promise not to write his biography, with the threat that his ghost would haunt them for the rest of their lives if any of them attempted to do so. In any case, the burning of his personal papers thwarted any attempt at a comprehensive biography of his life even if any one had wished to call his bluff.

The lack of material from the one basic source, from which any writer would under normal circumstances expect to build up a history of the Company, is the main reason why no published history has yet been written, although several attempts have been made at one time or another. Those who have waited so long for a history of the Royal Niger Company are therefore entitled to know what change in circumstances has made me feel I can now attempt a work which has baulked so many in the past, and it is for this reason that these notes have been written.

I have an initial advantage over others in that it is sixteen years since I first came out to Nigeria, and during that time I have been fortunate enough to have been stationed in various places throughout all three regions. I therefore have some knowledge of the country as a whole. For over twelve of those sixteen years I have worked as an employee of the Company whose history I am compiling. This has been a great assistance, as apart from having access to files and information, which for obvious reasons are not generally available, I have been brought up, so to speak, in the trading world and have listened to the reminiscences of many an European who has since retired. However, I consider that one of my greatest advantages has been that most of my time has been spent in the vicinity of the Niger and Benue rivers, so that there are very few stations between Onitsha and Boussa, and Onitsha and Garua which I have not visited. The result is that I have been able to draw on the reminiscences of many an old

man in the heart of the Royal Niger Company's former territories, and this has been made easier for me by the fact that I have been able to use the services of Company employees in the more remote places to search out old men for me to interview on my next visit to their station.

Before going into detail regarding my various sources of information, I would mention that the period involved in this history will be from about 1862, when the West Africa Company Limited (a predecessor of one of the four firms which amalgamated in 1879 to form Goldie's first combine—The United African Company Limited) was first registered, up to 1929, when the major struggles over the various amalgamations had subsided and the United Africa Company Limited was formed. The ramifications of the firms which formed the United Africa Company are so world wide that a complete history of the Company would be a full time task. Except, therefore, where it has been necessary to enlarge on the Company's activities elsewhere in order to emphasise a point appertaining to the Company's activities in Nigeria, the book will only be concerned with Nigeria.

## (2) *Sources of information*

### (a) *Foreign Office records*

The series F.O.2 and F.O.84 covering consular reports and correspondence from West Africa have proved invaluable, not only as a general background, but also for small points of detail from which a lot can be deduced in conjunction with information from elsewhere. For instance the earlier reports give over a period sufficient information about that remarkable man William McCoskry for one to get a very good idea of his character apart from his varied career on the Coast, which culminated in him becoming the Agent of the West Africa Company Limited. Having come out in 1850 as a trader he alternated between being an Agent for whichever Company suited his liking at the time, and being an independent trader on his own. On 1st March, 1861 he was appointed a Vice-Consul at Lagos, and only sixteen days later had to take over the duties of Consul due to the death of Consul Foote. Owing to the fact that no relief was sent out for some time, it was left to McCoskry to sign the treaty of 6th August 1861, by which Lagos was ceded to England, and from then until 22nd January 1862 when Governor Freeman arrived, he signed himself as Acting Governor. In 1863 he went up the Niger with Bishop Crowther, this time in his capacity as Agent of the West Africa Company Limited, and returned to report favourably on Lokoja as a potential trading station. The Company followed up his recommendations by sending up a ship in the following year, and from that date trade on the Niger can be said to have been re-established as a permanency.

Later reports also give a certain amount of detail regarding the activities of David Mc.Intosh, the Chief Agent of the Central African Trading Company Limited, who was made a Vice-Consul on the river in 1884 and was Goldie's right hand man on the Coast. In particular his report of the joint venture by all firms concerned to remove their stocks and staff from Yamaha on the Benue, where they were being tyrannized by the local Chief, makes interesting reading (F.O. 84/1541 of 1879), and must have been typical of many similar expeditions he was to organize later as Agent General of Goldie's various Companies.

Unfortunately little is mentioned in these records of the activities on the Niger of the two other firms that were to form the first amalgamation in 1879. Alexander Miller, Brother and Company's activities in the Opobo/Bonny area are well documented, but almost as little was said of them on the Niger, as there was of Mr. James Pinnock, who was a much smaller concern.

Special mention in this series should be made of F.O.84/1879 and F.O.84/1880, as these cover the correspondence concerning the granting of a Charter to Goldie's Company. If ever there was a story of frustration, this is it. Goldie's action of threatening to sell out to another Power has been criticised in certain quarters, but after reading the correspondence in these records and elsewhere I do not blame him for trying any expedient in order to get some decision from the British Government. It has also been said that his threat was pure bluff, as the area had been designated as a British sphere of influence at the Berlin Conference, and he therefore had no right to offer the territory to another Power. However, no one could stop him selling the assets of his firm, and if he had done this, the question of whether the area could still be called a British Sphere of Influence would no doubt have been brought up by the purchasing Power and caused the British Government considerable embarrassment.

Consul Hopkin's report of 18/11/1878 (F.O.84/1508) is also worth mentioning in that it gives a very detailed picture of the position of the firms trading at that time on the Niger. His inclusion of the names of people and ships concerned with each firm also enables one to deduce from previous documents facts that would otherwise have been overlooked.

The series F.O.97 covering the various Niger Expeditions, reports from Lokoja and applications for Charters, although useful is not as informative with regard to the Niger Company's predecessors as I had hoped. It does, however, give as clear a picture as possible of the struggle by certain groups of traders to obtain a Charter on the same lines as that granted to MacGregor Laird. As, however, nothing resulted from the wealth of memoranda, applications and correspondence, the information gained from this series is of little assistance in compiling a history of the Company.

The series F.O.403, on the other hand, is a most vital one, as it covers correspondence with the Company between 1885 and 1888

regarding the setting up and running of the Administration of the Company's territories under the Charter. This contains the only complete record that I have seen of the organization of the Company, for all Regulations issued by the Company during that period are included, as well as correspondence from Goldie enlarging on certain aspects of them. Briefly, Goldie's idea was that the Board of Directors, or Council as it was called, would be the ultimate authority rather like a Governor. However, communications between the U.K. and the Coast, being so unreliable it was necessary to have certain people responsible for making decisions on the spot, which at a later date could be confirmed by the Council. An Agent General was therefore appointed to look after all administrative details on the Coast, a Commandant was appointed to look after the discipline and efficiency of the Royal Niger Constabulary, and a Supreme Judge to look after all judicial matters. Each was entirely in charge of his own department and answerable only to the Council in London. It was appreciated that, although the departments were separate, at some point in the Company's organization a man would have to combine the duties of Administrator, Local Commandant and Judiciary. Therefore the territory was divided into districts (varying from 8 to 12) under the guidance of District Agents with one or several Assistant District Agents to help him in his duties. The District Agent had full executive authority in his own district subject to instructions received from the Agent General, and had complete control of the Armed Forces in his district except when the Commandant of Constabulary had assumed personal command. (It should be noted here that the Commandant was not responsible for deciding where or when troops were required. His job was to provide troops at the request of the Agent General or his representative). As far as the Judicial side of a District Agent's duties were concerned, he had authority to hear and decide certain issues subject to appeal to the Supreme Court at Asaba, but in all criminal cases, cases involving a foreigner or involving an amount exceeding £50 he could only make a preliminary investigation and forward the case to the Supreme Judge at Asaba for hearing. Communications on the Coast itself being also very slow, a safeguard was made in the Regulations to ensure that action could be taken at any spot in the Company's territories without undue delay. The title of Senior Executive Officer was created and originally granted to six of the Senior men, most of whom were District Agents. As a Senior Executive Officer a man could be designated specifically by the Agent General to act on his behalf with full powers of an Agent General, or else could assume such powers if the situation warranted it. Thus on several occasions two or more men were acting as Agents General, and this has given rise to errors in many books on Nigeria, which claim that William Wallace and others were at one time the Agent General of the Company. There were only two substantive Agents General throughout the whole life of the Royal Niger Company. The first was David Mc.Intosh, who had to retire due to sickness, and

died at the early age of 44 in 1888, and the second was Joseph Flint, who was confirmed as Agent General on 15th November 1888 and continued as such until the Company handed over to Government on 1st January, 1900. All others took on the duties in an acting capacity only, even when relieving Flint for his leave.

#### (b) *Company Register files*

A glance through various company files in the Companies Register Office and those which are now deposited in the Public Records Office, reveal quite a lot of detail in spite of the fact that companies are obliged to send very little information to this section of the Inland Revenue Department.

For instance, Goldie's connection with the Central African Trading Company Limited is stated by various authors of books on Nigeria to be anything from a slight interest to a very large financial interest. The Central African Trading Company's file reveals, however, that the Company was registered on 13/5/1876 with the object of taking over the business of Messrs. Holland Jacques and Co., for which Goldie was paid £15,000 in 1500 fully paid £10. shares of the Central African Trading Company and £15,000 in debentures. A list of shareholders dated 24th January 1877 shows that Goldie's family held 1802 shares out of a total of 1807 shares issued; so it is fair to say that Goldie's family virtually owned the Central African Trading Co. Limited, when he came out to investigate the condition of it in 1877.

The file of the West African Company Limited, which was registered on 16/5/1877, reveals that this company took over the assets of the West Africa Company Limited, which had been registered on 2/10/1862. The list of shareholders and directors in the files of each of these companies show that the slight change in name was due to a change in the directing power. Thomas Clegg was the power behind the earlier company, having given up his interest in his own firm of Thomas Clegg, Clare and Co., whereas John Edgar, who served on the Board of Goldie's companies until 1895 when he died, was the power behind the later one.

I would, however, warn research enthusiasts that such company files usually contain little more than the articles of association, lists of shareholders, records of take-over agreements, address of head office, and records of mortgages and debentures. In some cases even certain of these items are not included, but all the same one can with patience deduce quite a bit of information from what is filed.

#### (c) *The United Africa Company's Documents on the Coast*

It is unfortunate that almost all files and ledgers prior to the formation of the United Africa Company in 1929 have been destroyed. The few that have been preserved are mainly property files, which, although useful in pin-pointing the dates when trade opened in various

places, do not add much to the story of the Company. However, the odd document still keeps on turning up to add yet another detail to trading conditions and the organization of the Company at the time. For instance, it is only recently that I have completed my notes on the daily diaries kept by Messrs. Laws and Archbold during the early days of their tin prospecting on the Jos Plateau. However, not all discoveries are as rewarding as these diaries. In most cases it is a matter of slogging through a pile of rat and ant eaten files in order to gain one small, albeit vital, bit of information.

(d) *The United Africa Company's Documents in Head Office*

I have already mentioned the Company's Minute Books. The interesting one is that which covers the period from the formation of the National African Company on 8th July 1882 up to the end of 1889, when the Company was in existence as the Royal Niger Company Chartered and Limited. Naturally it does not contain much in detail, but there is sufficient to follow the train of events in such matters as the efforts made to buy out the Societe Francaise de L'Afrique Equatorial, which started in 1882 and was not completed until the end of 1884. It is also useful in confirming which people were doing what jobs on the Coast and in dating such matters as appointments, the launching of river steamers, building the wharf at Akassa and various agreements. One interesting point which has come to light from these Minutes, is that the original name recommended for the Royal Niger Company was "The Niger Administration Chartered and Limited". However the name only remained in favour for 2 weeks.

The Minute book covering 1890 up to 1st January 1900 is unfortunately missing, although there are people in Head Office who claim to have seen it at some time; so it is hoped that in due course it will be traced. From 1900 onwards all the Minute books are intact, but as it is from this period that the history of Nigeria starts to become better known and the Company was not so actively concerned, their value is not so great.

Other documents include such things as sets of Regulations concerning trade, and a few records of the Royal Niger Constabulary, including an informative summary of the various punitive expeditions from October 1886. This summary, however, needs to be read with some knowledge of the background in order to obtain full benefit. There is very little correspondence of much value except that with the Foreign Office and elsewhere, which concerned the infiltration of the French into Borgu when the Company was busy on the famous Bida Campaign of 1897. One document of interest is a letter written in Arabic script from Zubeiru, Lamido Adamawa, confirming that the Company had been given a piece of land by him on which to trade. This is dated 13th July 1894 and was presumably due to the Company's frequent representations to the Sultan of Sokoto on the

unsatisfactory state of affairs in Adamawa. However, as we now know, it made little difference to Zubeiru's attitude towards the Company's activities there.

It is not generally known that sometime before the last war the present Company made a serious attempt to have a history written of the Company as a whole. The man compiling it unfortunately died just before the war and his notes stop at 1938. These are still available, but a lot of fresh information has since come to light which now means that to make his notes worthwhile they would have to be rewritten. As the history was to cover the whole of the United Africa Company, the writer could not go deeply into the sort of details which would have had a particular interest to those interested in the history of Nigeria. However, he had access to the reminiscences of Europeans who have since died, and he obviously went to great trouble in order to sort out the various amalgamations which formed the present Company.

#### (e) *Personal Reminiscences*

I am fortunate in having copies of the dictated reminiscences of Robert Lenthal who came out to Nigeria in 1886 and was made an Agent General of the Niger Company in 1906; of Colonel Ratsey, who joined the Company in 1891 and was responsible for building the Company's privately owned port at Burutu; and Mr. R. A. Archbold, who came out in 1904 and was jointly responsible with Colonel Laws for the opening up of tin on the Plateau. The most informative of these is that of Mr. Lenthal, which he dictated in 1948 when he was over 80. He was over ninety when he died, and yet even up to his last illness his mind was as alive as ever. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of Colonel Ratsey, so that his notes have to be checked against known factors. Mr. Archbold's notes are in a different category as they are more general; but read in conjunction with the Niger Company's Mines Department diaries, which I have mentioned earlier, they give a very good picture of conditions at that time.

For the latter half of the Niger Company's existence, my knowledge of conditions at the time has been gained in the main from European Managers, who are now retired (two of them in Nigeria) and from retired African Staff and traders. One thing that seems to have impressed them all was the strict discipline which was maintained in each factory. One hears so many stories of the Palm Oil Ruffian and his various escapades, but so little of the other side of the picture. A young assistant coming out would be put to work in the canteen or on the beach, and his hours would be from 5.30 a.m. until he had finished writing up his books by hurricane lantern at night. Little time did he have for his own enjoyment, until the day eventually came when he was made a full agent with European assistants under him. Then his word would be treated as law, and woe betide any assistant who wasn't prepared to rough it as he had done.

One of the most fruitful sources of information to add detail to various incidents in the history of the Royal Niger Company has been old men in villages along the Niger and Benue rivers who were either once employed by the Company or had close dealings with them. Old and frail though many of them unfortunately are, I have been amazed how accurate their memories can be. One old man, who joined the Royal Niger Company in about 1887 and retired just before the 1914-18 War, was able to give me an eye witness account of the sacking of the Company's canteen at Lau in 1891, apart from other details about the Company's activities on the Benue. I even argued with him about the site of the Company's barracks at Ibi, only to find later when checking with an old man at Ibi that he was right. I have found that in talking to these old men I can usually tell within the first minute or two those who are genuine from those who are passing on hearsay or are trying to please. The non-genuine ones soon get mixed up over names and the relation of various incidents; as I make them talk without any assistance from me to jog their memories. Only when they have said all they can remember do I question them on what appear to me to be conflicting points.

(f) *British Museum*

Apart from various books, which are unobtainable from elsewhere and the *Times*, the main items of interest are certain state papers concerning West Africa. In particular, Major C. MacDonald's report on the Royal Niger Company after his visit to their territories in 1889 (Confidential 5913 of 13/1/1890—Vide also Foreign Office records 84/2019) and Sir J. Kirk's report on his investigations after the sacking of the Company's port at Akassa in 1895 (Africa No. 3. 1896-C7977 dated 25/8/1895).

The former is important in that it gives a detailed picture of the extent of the Company's activities in 1889, thus providing one of the all too few check points. The first check is Consul Hopkin's report of 1878, which I have already mentioned; the second is the agreement of 11/7/1882 by which the National African Company took over the assets of the United African Company (Company Register file of the National African Co); and the third is Macdonald's report of 1890. The papers relating to the surrender of the Royal Charter (Vol LXIII of 1898 and C9372 of 1899) reveal some details of the Company's organization, but mainly with regard to the items and stations which the Government wished to take over.

Sir J. Kirk's report is useful in that it deals with the facts about and behind the raid on Akassa, but for anyone who wants a really dramatic account of the raid itself I can strongly recommend chapter 8 of *In the Niger Country* by Harold Bindloss. It makes very good reading, but one cannot help wondering how much the "Old Coasters" had romanticized when telling him the tale!

### (g) *Books on West Africa*

For general information about all areas in Nigeria one cannot ignore *The History of Nigeria* by Sir Alan Burns; *British Nigeria* by Capt. A. F. Mockler-Ferryman; and *Nigeria under British Rule* by Sir W. N. M. Geary. To supplement Major Macdonald's report of 1890, one should read *Up the Niger* by Capt. Mockler-Ferryman, and for a background of the tin industry the two books *Nigeria and Its Tin Fields* by A. F. Calvert and *Through unknown Nigeria* by J. R. Raphael are indispensable.

I have said little as yet of the growth of the other side of the United Africa Company, which in its last stage as the African and Eastern Trade Corporation was eventually taken over and merged with the Niger Company to form the present Company. This is because the activities of the smaller Companies which combined to form this group were restricted in the pre-Colonial Government days to areas outside the Royal Niger Company's territories. Their activities therefore have been well documented in consular reports, which can be found in the Foreign Office records I have already mentioned. This has resulted in several writers producing books which, although dealing with other subjects, contain a considerable amount of information on trade. Among these I would mention Professor K. O. Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*, and for details of the Ja-Ja incident in particular, Sir W. Geary's *Nigeria under British Rule*. Both these authors show only too lucidly just how much the trading firms were involved over local politics in the Oil Rivers Protectorate.

Whilst many other books about Nigeria make interesting reading, few deal in any detail with regard to the various trading firms. Information about the firms are often included, but equally frequently the facts are a re-hash of somebody else's work; and it is interesting to note certain errors being carried on from one book to another. This I can accept, as usually the facts are incidental to the theme; but what I cannot accept is the book written with an authoritative tone by a person who has spent only a few months in the country and who is substantially inaccurate, not only on historical facts but also about the people. Far too many books have been written like this by various travellers over the years, and they do no good to anyone but possibly the author.

### (h) *General*

These notes obviously cannot detail every source of information. I haven't, for instance, mentioned the Provincial Gazetteers of Northern Nigeria or the Northern Nigeria Annual Reports from 1900 to 1910, which are important references. I feel, though, that there can be little written concerning the history of the Company which I have not read over the past seven or eight years I have spent on research; and during this time I have stumbled across all sorts of relics from the past.

The most rewarding of such discoveries was the actual Royal Niger Company flag, which was hauled down at Lokoja on 1st January 1900 during the ceremony at which the Company handed over to Government. This I traced from a chance remark in Jos, via a pub in Hertfordshire, to the back of a chemist's shop in Huddersfield. Although it was somewhat moth-eaten, there is ample proof to show that it was the flag handed over to the Agent General, Joseph Flint after the ceremony. The flag has since been renovated and was on display at the Kaduna Exhibition, and I believe it was also on display during the Independence Celebrations. This happened only two years ago, so I never give up hope of finding more material to enlarge on the total knowledge of the Company's activities.

RESEARCH NOTE  
BRONZES FROM EASTERN NIGERIA

Excavations at Igbo-Ukwu

*Submitted by*

C. THURSTAN SHAW

TWENTY years ago the finding of a number of interesting bronze vessels and ornaments was reported (*Man*, 1940, 1) from Igbo, in the Awka Division of Eastern Nigeria, about twenty-five miles south-east of Onitsha. Here, a man called Isaiah Anozie, was digging a water-cistern in his compound when he lighted upon a number of bronze vessels and ornaments. He piled them against the wall of his house, and with his consent a few of his neighbours helped themselves to some of them, believing them to be good 'medicine'. Some months later, the A.D.O. in the area, Mr. J. O. Field (now Commissioner for the Cameroons) heard of the bronzes, purchased them from the finder, and later presented them to the Nigerian Museum in Lagos, where they are now exhibited. The D. O. in the area collected most of the pieces which the finder's neighbours had taken. One or two pieces were subsequently recovered by the Surveyor of Antiquities, Mr. Kenneth Murray, and I managed to obtain one more during my sojourn in Igbo.

The finds consisted of a number of large bowls, resembling calabashes, with a single handle on one side; a number of narrow elongated bowls resembling 'pinched' calabashes; a bowl on its own openwork potstand, or brazier; two sword scabbards; two models of shells, either of a conch or of the large African land snail, but bigger than life-size and one surmounted by a bronze leopard; three or four ornaments in the shape of animal heads (ram and elephant), hollow-cast and with a large ring at the back for attachment; a small mask of a human face about three inches high showing face scarifications; some heavy coiled openwork ornaments, probably staff-heads, as well as a more solid type of staff-head, some coiled snakes ending in a spike; a circular potstand, a chain and a number of smaller bronze objects.

All these bronzes were characterised by very elaborate and ornate decoration, often showing representations of insects, such as crickets and flies. They are made by the *cire perdue* technique, and have a very high standard of craftsmanship. In style they are utterly unlike the work of either Benin or Ife, their age and affinities, and the reason for their burial in the ground, remained something of a mystery.

It was in the hopes of shedding some light on this mystery that the Director of the Nigerian Department of Antiquities, Mr. Bernard Fagg, asked me to excavate at the site and put funds and facilities at my disposal. All the finds made remain the property of the Nigerian Government.

Permission was obtained to excavate not only in the compound of Mr. Isaiah Anozie, but also in the neighbouring one of Mr. Richard Anozie. Here also a man had been digging a cistern and had come across some metal, and soil he described as 'like cement': he had been frightened it would collapse and had filled the hole in.

On both sites there was quite a large amount of clearance to be done before a sufficient space was available for satisfactory excavation. In one case a water cistern had to be filled in, trees felled, and a goat-house and compound walls demolished; in the other, as well as removing compound walls, some thirty tons of building sand had to be transported to another site.

We began digging at the southern end of Isaiah Anozie's compound, in the part furthest removed from the spot we were shown as the place where the original finds were made. Here we took out two squares, and found an interesting pottery vessel, consisting of a bowl on its own potstand somewhat resembling the bronze 'brazier' of the 1949 find. In addition there was a long iron knife, and the remains of two clearly-marked post-holes. These could be the only indication surviving of the traditional type of house in the area, in which the roof timbers are supported on the earth walls except on the open, or verandah, side, where two or three posts perform this function.

As soon as we opened a cutting nearer the source of the original find, we began coming upon more bronzes, and the very first was one of the finest we recovered. It consists of a representation in bronze of a water-pot set upon an openwork potstand, which thus forms a pedestal, and the whole is enclosed in a wonderful knotted rope-work pattern, which is attached below the rim of the pot and to the base but is freestanding away from the body of the vessel in the middle. It was necessary to remove this bronze from the ground on the day it came to light, but the remainder of the deposit was all completely laid bare before any of it was lifted. This was in order to see just how the objects lay in the ground and were disposed in order to try to discover why and how the hoard was left there. Although perhaps more than half the area had been dug over in 1939, we were fortunate to get the remainder undisturbed because it lay under or near the compound wall which we demolished. In this part of the deposit we found two more large calabash-shaped bowls, with wonderful patterns on them and in a better state of preservation than the 1939 ones; a bronze sword-scabbard and hilt, with the iron blade in position, another large bronze shell, and two animal-head ornaments; multiple small bronze ornaments, probably set in leather, one of the pieces of which still showed decoration with an incised pattern. There were also pottery vessels, and a large number of beads, some of which were uncovered

lying in their original strings, although the actual threads had perished. But perhaps the most interesting object was a remarkable cylindrical bronze potstand, with wide flanges at top and bottom and openwork panels on either side; one panel portrays a male, the other a female human figure, with markedly negroid features.

It appeared as if this whole deposit had been carefully stored (in some cases the bronze adjacent had served to preserve the textile materials used as wrapping), probably in a small low building, which had been left alone in time of war or a raid when the inhabitants had been exterminated, driven away or enslaved. The building had then fallen down, the bush had grown over, and the site was completely forgotten.

Richard Anozie's compound provided quite a different story, but was full of interests of its own. It contained a cooking-lace with a bronze flesh-hook and two other bronze instruments; a shrine or altar, with pots piled up in a heap and numerous little pottery pegs, artificially made out of broken potsherds; and an ancient cistern of whose existence the present inhabitants were quite unaware, now filled up with earth and potsherds; the bottom of this cistern was over 23 ft. below the surface of the ground.

The most interesting area was in the south-eastern part of this site, where there was a stretch of yellow sand contrasting with the uniform redness of the surrounding undisturbed Benin sand. This is what the cistern-digger of some twelve years before had described as 'like cement', and which had caused him to fill the pit in again for fear it might cave in on him. Here we found a rich burial which, from the positions of iron nails and clamps recovered, and from the traces of wood found, seems to have been placed in a timber-lined chamber, the floor of which was over 11 ft. below the present surface of the ground. The bones were incomplete and in a very bad state of preservation, their consistency being that of soft putty, softer than the surrounding earth in which they lay. However, we managed to recover the whole of the skull except for the facial area, with the jaw articulated in position. This skull seems to have been surrounded with a headdress completely covered over with innumerable beads. There were numerous objects of bronze, including a bronze leopard's skull set on top of a long rod. There were two anklets or wristlets made up of a bronze framework and with the intervening panels completely filled in with blue beads. There were three or four large ivory tusks, but perhaps the most interesting find was what remained of a large and elaborate headdress consisting of a double circle of bronze bosses set in a wooden hoop, and with a central bronze ornament.

What is the significance of all these rich finds? It seems likely that they are connected with a former 'Eze Nri'—the priest-king of the Umueri clan, which appears to have brought an intrusive culture into Iboland; for I discovered that the sites we excavated used formerly to be in Orieri, not in Igbo, and Orieri is one of the two places which is particularly associated with the Umueri clan and has an 'Eze Nri'.

To what date are we to attribute these finds? At present there is still considerable uncertainty about this, as there are no sure indications of date. It is probably too recent for radio-carbon methods to be of much help. Perhaps a date in the sixteenth or seventeenth century is the most likely, but we must be prepared to modify this guess if an earlier or later date is indicated by further more detailed work on the finds. I feel sure that the bronzes are of indigenous African workmanship, but at present there are only rather tantalising hints as to what their relationship may be to the rest of the West African bronze-casting tradition.



## BOOK REVIEWS

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NIGERIA—By Dr. Kalu Ezera;  
*Cambridge University Press*, 1960. 30s.

THIS book is described by its author as “an analytical study of Nigeria’s constitution-making developments and the historical and political factors that affected constitutional change”. In spite of this imposing sub-title it is not unfair to him to start by discussing it at the more humdrum level of a pocket encyclopedia, which tells you who’s who and what’s what in the last twenty years. For it is a very good pocket encyclopedia, which fills a need in a country where even the keen student finds it difficult to remember how one constitutional conference, one revenue allocation commission, differed from another so quickly have they trodden on each other’s toes. Dr. Ezera’s account flows, the essential points are all there, words are not wasted and the story of these twenty years unfolds as a pattern instead of as a series of interminable and disjointed arguments.

How far does the book go beyond this and justify its sub-title? The techniques of the scholar—research into original documents, the weighing of evidence—are not particularly relevant to this subject. Confidential papers are not likely to be available, one is sorry to think, in Dr. Ezera’s lifetime. What were needed in this book were first, industry, to master the formidable body of official papers and speeches; and second, a detached and objective point of view about the protagonists, most of whom are still very much alive. Dr. Ezera has supplied the first, and up to a certain point the second, and has threaded the sections of his encyclopedia together in a coherent way.

For the most part his objectivity is remarkable. A speech by Sir Hugh Clifford, splendid in its reactionary short-sightedness even by the standards of 1920, and causing even an Englishman to wriggle with embarrassment, is treated with bland good humour; almost with respect, as representing a point of view which must be considered. His treatment of what might be called the Milverton Myth is equally fair-minded. The Myth, widely held among Nigerian intelligentsia, holds that God created a united country called Nigeria, in which all men lived at peace; until one day there came a wicked man called Richards, who set out subtly to destroy this unity, this peace, by dividing the country into Regions in order that the British could go on ruling it for ever. Dr. Ezera has no particular respect for the Richards constitution, and none at all for the way in which the Governor forced it through with inadequate consultation. But he realises that men like Sir Arthur Richards are not masters of a situation on which they impose their will; but victims of an incredibly complicated set of circumstances, in which they do the best they can. In this particular case he makes it clear that Richards inherited the concept of Regional Government from his predecessor; that it seemed to Bourdillon to represent the only way in which one Nigeria, i.e. a

Nigeria which would include the North, could ever hope to be established; that he happened to govern Nigeria at a time when any Governor would have been caught between wind and water, since indirect rule, which had reached the limit of its usefulness, was in collision with representative government; and that he was personally honest and sincere in all that he did. It is agreeable to find that a Nigerian will, in the interest of truth, make this objective assessment of Nigeria's most unpopular Englishman.

It is a pity that an author who can treat my fellow-countrymen, who must have caused him a lot of irritation, with such controlled courtesy, is somewhat less objective about his own. His splendid detachment breaks down, for example, when he summarises the prevailing political philosophies in Nigeria, and the personalities of their leading exponents. No political leader should be held (to his disadvantage) to the letter of something that he wrote more than fifteen years ago (p. 101); and to link a passage taken out of context from the *Path to Nigerian Freedom* with the egregious nonsense uttered by Sir Hugh Clifford in 1920 is quite definitely naughty of Dr. Ezera. There are other places too where his treatment of Nigerian politicians is less detached than his treatment of British Governors. This is all very well for the Hon. Kalu Ezera, M.H.R., but not for Dr. Kalu Ezera, Ph.D.

But all the same he has written a useful book.

R. E. WRAITH





